WIOA STATE PLAN FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO

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OVERVIEW

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Governor of each State must submit a Unified or Combined State Plan to the U.S. Secretary of Labor that outlines a four-year workforce development strategy for the State's workforce development system. The publicly-funded workforce system is a national network of Federal, State, regional, and local agencies and organizations that provide a range of employment, education, training, and related services and supports to help all jobseekers secure good jobs while providing businesses with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. States must have approved Unified or Combined State Plans in place to receive funding for core programs. WIOA reforms planning requirements, previously governed by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), to foster better alignment of Federal investments in job training, to integrate service delivery across programs and improve efficiency in service delivery, and to ensure that the workforce system is job-driven and matches employers with skilled individuals. One of WIOA's principal areas of reform is to require States to plan across core programs and include this planning process in the Unified or Combined State Plans. This reform promotes a shared understanding of the workforce needs within each State and fosters development of more comprehensive and integrated approaches, such as career pathways and sector strategies, for addressing the needs of businesses and workers. Successful implementation of many of these approaches called for within WIOA requires robust relationships across programs. WIOA requires States and local areas to enhance coordination and partnerships with local entities and supportive service agencies for strengthened service delivery, including through Unified or Combined State Plans.

OPTIONS FOR SUBMITTING A STATE PLAN

A State has two options for submitting a State Plan — a Unified State Plan or a Combined State Plan. At a minimum, a State must submit a Unified State Plan that meets the requirements described in this document and outlines a four-year strategy for the core programs. The six core programs are—

- the Adult Program (Title I of WIOA),
- the Dislocated Worker Program (Title I),
- the Youth Program (Title I),
- the Adult Education and Literacy Program (Title II),
- the Wagner-Peyser Act Program (Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III), and
- the Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV).

Alternatively, a State may submit a Combined State Plan that meets the requirements described in this document and outlines a four-year strategy for WIOA's core programs plus one or more of the Combined Plan partner programs. When a State includes a Combined State Plan partner program in its Combined State Plan, it need not submit a separate plan or application for that particular program. If included, Combined State Plan partner programs are subject to the "common planning elements" (Sections II and III of this document) where specified, as well as the program-specific requirements for that program. The Combined State Plan partner programs are—

- Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)
- Employment and Training Programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4)))
- Work programs authorized under section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o))
- Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers Programs (Activities authorized under chapter 2 of Title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.))
- Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (Programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et. seq.)
- Unemployment Insurance Programs (Programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws in accordance with applicable Federal law)
- Senior Community Service Employment Program (Programs authorized under Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.))
- Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Community Services Block Grant Program (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.))*
- Reintegration of Ex-Offenders Program (Programs authorized under section 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. 17532))

* States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.) under a Combined State Plan would submit all other required elements of a complete CSBG State Plan directly to the Federal agency that administers the program. Similarly, States that elect to include employment and training activities carried by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) and 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 that are included would submit all other required elements of a complete State Plan for those programs directly to the Federal agency that administers the program.

HOW STATE PLAN REQUIREMENTS ARE ORGANIZED

The major content areas of the Unified or Combined State Plan include strategic and operational planning elements. WIOA separates the strategic and operational elements to facilitate cross-program strategic planning.

- The **Strategic Planning Elements** section includes analyses of the State's economic conditions, workforce characteristics, and workforce development activities. These analyses drive the required vision and goals for the State's workforce development system and alignment strategies for workforce development programs to support economic growth.
- The **Operational Planning Elements** section identifies the State's efforts to support the State's strategic vision and goals as identified in the Strategic Planning Elements section. This section ensures that the State has the necessary infrastructure, policies, and activities to meet its strategic goals, implement its alignment strategy, and support ongoing program development and coordination. Operational planning elements include:
    - State Strategy Implementation,
    - State Operating Systems and Policies,
    - Assurances, and
    - Program-Specific Requirements for the Core Programs, and
    - Program-Specific Requirements for the Combined State Plan partner programs.

When responding to Unified or Combined State Plan requirements, States must identify specific strategies for coordinating programs and services for target populations.* While discussion of and strategies for every target population is not expected, States must address as many as are applicable to their State's population and look beyond strategies for the general population.

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* Target populations include individuals with barriers to employment, as defined in WIOA Sec. 3, as well as veterans, unemployed workers, and youth.

I. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE

Unified or Combined State Plan. Select whether the State is submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan. At a minimum, a State must submit a Unified State Plan that covers the six core programs.

Unified State Plan. This plan includes the Adult Program, Dislocated Worker Program, Youth Program, Wagner-Peyser Act Program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program, and Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Yes

Combined State Plan. This plan includes the Adult Worker Program, Dislocated Worker Program, Youth Program, Wagner-Peyser Act Program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program, and Vocational Rehabilitation Program as well as one or more of the optional combined State Plan partner programs identified below. No

COMBINED PLAN PARTNER PROGRAM(S)

Indicate which Combined Plan partner program(s) the state is electing to include in the plan.

Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.) No

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) No

Employment and Training Programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4))) No

Work programs authorized under section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o))) No

Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers Programs (Activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.)) No

Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et. seq.) No

Unemployment Insurance Programs (Programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws in accordance with applicable Federal law) No

Senior Community Service Employment Program (Programs authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.)) No

Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development No

Community Services Block Grant Program (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.)) No

Reintegration of Ex-Offenders Program (Programs authorized under section 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. 17532))] No

II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a Strategic Planning Elements section that analyzes the State's current economic environment and identifies the State's overall vision for its workforce development system. The required elements in this section allow the State to develop data-driven goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and to identify successful strategies for aligning workforce development programs. Unless otherwise noted, all Strategic Planning Elements apply to Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs.

A. ECONOMIC, WORKFORCE, AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions, economic development strategies, and labor market in which the State's workforce system and programs will operate.

1. ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

A. ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions and trends in the State, including sub-State regions and any specific economic areas identified by the State. This must include-

I. EXISTING DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS

Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which there is existing demand.

II. EMERGING INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATION

Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which demand is emerging.

III. EMPLOYERS' EMPLOYMENT NEEDS

With regard to the industry sectors and occupations identified in 1 and 2 above, provide an assessment of the employment needs of employers, including a description of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required, including credentials and licenses.

The US Department of Treasury report, Addressing Puerto Rico's Economic and Fiscal Crisis and Creating a Path to Recovery: Roadmap for Congressional Action, described the Commonwealth's present juncture by pointing out that "3.5 million Americans living in Puerto Rico have endured a decade of economic stagnation. Since 2006, Puerto Rico's economy has shrunk by more than 10 percent and shed more than 250,000 jobs. More than 45 percent of the Commonwealth's residents live in poverty –the highest poverty rate of any state or territory– and its 11.6 percent unemployment rate is more than twice the national level. These challenges have sparked the largest wave of outmigration since the 1950's, and the pace continues to accelerate. More than 300,000 people have left Puerto Rico in the past decade; a record 84,000 people left in 2014".

The sun setting of the of the Internal Revenue Code's section 936 application and the extending 30A in 2005, absent a comparable mechanism to fuel jobs and capital investment, led the challenge to the knowledge–intensive manufacturing basing Puerto Rico's economy. The Puerto Rico Planning Board's (PRPB) coincident economic index shows that manufacture gained 1% since 2005, but lost 6% since 2008, when its peak performance was reversed. The scenario is further stressed by a construction sector that has contracted 59% since 2005 supported on a similar share of public and private investment throughout; meanwhile, tourism has expanded 8% since 2005.

Puerto Rico's GNP experienced a drop of 0.2% in 2013 and 0.9% in FY 2014. The PRPB projects additional decreases in the order of 0.9% and 1.2% for FY 2015 and FY 2016, respectively. In all, from FY2005 to 2014, the GNP shrank 12.6%, in route to 14.4% in FY2016, as projected by the PRPB. At 7%, GDP's decrease up to FY2014 is roughly half. In real terms, the ratio between GDP and GNP has remained unchanged in the last decade. In constant terms, a 6% shift has favored GDP's weight.

As remarked in the US Treasury Department's report, the Commonwealth's debt service now consumes more than one–third of annual revenues when looking at the full range of debt supported

primarily by the Commonwealth's taxing authority. This compares to a US median of approximately 5% for states in FY 2014. It also imposes severe limitations to the ability of the Commonwealth to strategically invest in shoring up its workforce system. From FY 2015–2014, the state–level government shed 15% of its employment, in tandem with an 18% decrease for the Commonwealth's total employment. Unemployment rate started to subside in FY 2010, when it peaked at 16.3%, down to 13.0% in FY 2015.

The US Treasury Department, the Puerto Rico Committee on Fiscal Crisis, and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York all have recommended the extension of the Earned Income Tax Credit to the Commonwealth and other structural changes to counter the extreme low levels of participation rates, especially among the youth, which remains as one of the main challenges in furthering our economic development.

As explained in the US Economic Development Administration's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Puerto Rico, regionalization is considered a key component of the Administration's plans for government reform and seen as an effective means of mobilizing local resources in support of economic development. Local partnerships between local governments, industry and academia have specific regional core competences: INTECO, in central Puerto Rico has health services and medical instruments as its key sectors; INTENOR in the North has the pharmaceutical cluster as its core; in the Northeast, INTENE's strength is in the development of tourism and transportation; DISUR in the South is developing initiatives in areas such as logistics, agro–industry and health services, and PR–TEC in the West, the oldest of the initiatives, was developed around the concentration of various high tech industries in region, including the aerospace industry, and the existence of the UPR Mayaguez Campus and its strength in Engineering and Science.

For additional information on the economic conditions and trends, please refer to the PRDOLHR's Economic Analysis Report, 2015.

EXISTING DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS

Industry sectors in general

As shown in next section the industrial sectors with the highest share of GDP output in FY2014 were: Manufacturing, with almost half at 47.6%; followed by Real Estate and Rental, at 15.2%; Government, at 7.6%; Retail Trade, at 4.9%; Finance and Insurance with 4.5%; and Health Care and Social Services, with 3.5%. Taken together, these industrial sectors comprise close to 84% of Puerto Rico's GDP output.

Industry sectors in general

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From FY 2005 to FY 2014, only three industrial nonfarm sectors were able to expand their share of GDP aside from Agriculture. These were: Real Estate and Rental, with 33.1%; Manufacturing, 12.2%; and Administrative Services and Support with a modest increase in share of 3.9%. On the

flip side, Arts, Entertainment and Recreation lost almost 70% of its share, while Construction, Mining and Management lost over half of theirs and Finance and Insurance more than a third.

When focusing on the changes in GDP output among major industrial sectors in the shorter span of 2011 to 2014, additional movers emerge, with Professional, Scientific and Technical Services with a change in share of 11.3%, closely followed by Accommodation and Food Services at 9.5%, and Utilities at 8.2%. The Information sector, on the contrary, seems to accelerate its decrease with 11.5% for the period.

As shown in next section major industrial sectors with most estimated jobs were Government, Retail Trade, Educational Services and Health and Social Assistance. These concentrated more than half of the estimated total employment. Among those with a significant share of employment, Manufacturing, Government and Education Services had the largest decreases.

BREAKDOWN EMPLOYMENT ESTIMATES BY MAJOR INDUSTRY, 2014

Industrial Sector, Total, As % of total, Change 2012–2014 (%)

Agriculture, 5,926, 0.7, –2.3; Mining, 670, 0.1, –14.1; Utilities, 320, 0.0, –8.6; Construction, 27,180, 3.0, –22.7; Manufacturing, 63,060, 7.0, –29.1; Wholesalers Trade, 31,490, 3.5, –3.9; Retail Trade, 132,810, 14.7, 2.1; Transportation and Warehousing, 17,280, 1.9, 7.2; Information, 19,400, 2.1, 2.5; Finance and Insurance, 31,050, 3.4, –2.8; Real Estate and Rental, 12,530, 1.4, –3.7; Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services, 28,720, 3.2, 6.4; Management of Companies and Enterprises, 11,330, 1.3, 4.5; Administrative Services and Support and Waste Management and Remediation, 75,730, 8.4, 6.2; Educational Services, 100,240, 11.1, –8.8; Health Care and Social Services, 85,420, 9.5, 6.6; Art, Entertainment and Recreation, 3,810, 0.4, 56.8; Accommodation and Food Services, 76,800, 8.5, 9.3; Other Services, 13,870, 1.5, 1.7; Government, 158,250, 17.5, –18.4.

INDUSTRIES

In 2014, industries with the vacancies most difficult to fill were Services–related, while those with the highest rate in vacancies were in Public Administration and Education Services (which has an important component of public employment).

Statistic of the PRDOLHR, Skills and Occupations in High–Demand 2014, shows the data of the industries with most difficult to fill vacancies, job vacancies' rates and over–qualification rates, as follows:

A. Establishments with difficult to fill vacancies (%): Administrative Services and Support 83.3; Other services 76.6; Educational Services 73.9; Retail Trade 72.7; Construction 63.5; Health Care and Social Services 61.5; Finance and Insurance 57.1; Manufacturing 51.5; Real Estate and Leasing 41.9; Professional, Scientific, Technical Services 41.4; Wholesale Trade 39.7; Information 33.3; Public Administration 27.1; Accommodation and Food Services 21.2; Others 0.0.

B. Job vacancies' rate (%): Administrative Services and Support 3.7; Other services 1.5; Educational Services 9.1; Retail Trade 0.8; Construction 0.4; Health Care and Social Services 2.5; Finance and Insurance 1.4; Manufacturing 1.1; Real Estate and Leasing 2.9; Professional, Scientific, Technical Services 2.0; Wholesale Trade 1.3; Information 1.1 Public Administration 14.6 ;Accommodation and Food Services 2.4 ;Art, Entertainment and Recreation 2.1; Management 1.1; Agriculture and Mining 0.8; Transportation and Warehousing 0.3; Utilities 0.0.

C. Over–qualification rate (%): Administrative Services and Support 34.1; Other services 51.0; Educational Services 29.1; Retail Trade 45.8; Construction 13.0; Health Care and Social Services 40.2; Finance and Insurance 54.1; Manufacturing 29.2; Real Estate and Leasing 18.3; Professional, Scientific, Technical Services 32.8; Wholesale Trade 30.3; Information 81.0; Public Administration 40.7; Accommodation and Food Services 71.9; Art, Entertainment and Recreation 64.7; Management100.0; Agriculture and Mining 0; Transportation and Warehousing 68.7; Utilities 0.

D. Occupancies with most difficult to fill by Vacancy Rate (%) are: Pharmacists 3.9 ; Retail salespersons 3.9; Emergency medical technicians and paramedics 3.2; Executive secretaries and executive administrative assistants 2.5; Automotive service technicians and mechanics 2.5; Licensed practical and vocational nurses 2.4; Respiratory therapy technicians 2.2; Bill and account collectors 2.2; Cashiers 2.1; Computer and information system managers 1.9.

E. Occupancies with most difficult to fill vacancies by change in employment in 2010–2014 were: .Pharmacists –20; Retail salespersons 5,100; Emergency medical technicians and paramedics –900; Executive secretaries and executive administrative assistants –3,430; Automotive service technicians and mechanics 120; Licensed practical and vocational nurses –1,220; Respiratory therapy technicians –40; Bill and account collectors –1,340; Cashiers 2,970; Computer and information system managers 140.

F. Occupancies with most difficult to fill vacancies projected openings to 2012–2022 are: Pharmacists 1,193; Retail salespersons 23,418; Emergency medical technicians and paramedics 699; Executive secretaries and executive administrative assistants 376; Automotive service technicians and mechanics 1,790; Licensed practical and vocational nurses 1,769; Respiratory therapy technicians 174; Bill and account collectors 1,192; Cashiers 16,708; Computer and information system managers 345.

G. Top skills required from an employee, respondents selecting in 2014 (%) were: Punctuality and responsibility 81.1; Ability to follow instructions 79.7; Verbal and written communication 66.7; Teamwork 61.4; Ability to provide customer–service 58.1; Capacity to learn 52.3; Ability to anticipate and prevent problems 42.5; Ability to identify and solve problems 42.4; Self–motivation, initiative and dynamism 35.8; Ability to work under pressure 35.7; Ability to work with minimal supervision 32.0; Ability to make decisions 30.8; Mathematical skills 23.7; Capacity to adapt to new situations and demands 20.7; English proficiency 19.9; Familiarity with computer use 19.7; Leadership 18.5; Attention to detail at work 16.2; Capacity to determine priorities and meet deadlines 15.1; Ability to perform repetitive tasks 15.1; Critical thinking 12.0 Interpersonal skills 11.9; Ability to operate machinery and equipment 11.1; Ability to organize, plan and manage resources 8.6; Goal–oriented 8.2; Technical or academic knowledge 8.0; Knowledge of information technology 7.7; Physical and mobility skills 5.9; Negotiation ability 5.8; Creativity and innovation 4.7.

In coordination with industry experts, the State Board and core programs will further the implementation of the USDOL's industry competency models and their mapping to local requirements and conditions, in order to document and validate the skills needs within targeted strategic sectors.

EMERGING DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS

Industrial Sectors

PRDEDC's agenda for economic development revolves around key strategic industrial sectors.

Life sciences: pharmaceutical manufacturing. Two segments of the pharmaceutical industry are currently experiencing excellent growth in the world's markets: (1) generic medications and (2) biologicals. While it is estimated that generics will have the greater growth, with a projected compound annual growth of 11% (2012–2016), most of the innovations in this industry are happening in biologicals. Therefore, the panorama for growth in both fields represents an excellent opportunity for Puerto Rican labor. Some of the strategies involve:

• Protecting existing pharmaceutical operations through collaboration with companies in this sector

• Actively intervening in the sale of closed plants or plants in the process of closing, ensuring a connection to interested companies so that they may take over or adapt the operation of those plants, thereby minimizing downtime

• Fostering the establishment of a pharmaceutical industry specializing in the production of generics and biologicals, using local capital investment. Use the Puerto Rico Industrial Development Corporation (PRIDCO) as a partner for businesses

• Attracting retail packaging and distribution operations to complement already existing

manufacturing operations

• Developing local abilities for pharmaceutical research and development in order to create intellectual property in Puerto Rico

• Developing joint training programs with universities and companies in the private sector in order to strengthen the future labor force and offer better job and growth opportunities

With five decades of pharmaceutical manufacturing, Puerto Rico has a highly experienced workforce knowledgeable in GMP, FDA and other global regulations. Although 60% of employees in the life sciences have at least a bachelor's degree, Puerto Rico offers the lowest labor costs of any region under U.S. jurisdiction – with hourly earnings in manufacturing averaging 65 to 80% of the U.S. average.

Life sciences: manufacturing of medical devices. This sector is expected to experience a growth rate of 6% per year through 2020. Puerto Rico is in a unique position to take advantage of this tendency, since we have an impressive history of $4.5 billion in exports in the manufacture of medical devices, and thirteen of the world's twenty largest firms in this sector are in Puerto Rico. Some of the strategies involve:

• Attracting new lines of production to companies established in Puerto Rico

• Fostering research, development, and manufacture of new products in Puerto Rico

• Focusing promotional efforts in high–growth sectors and corporations, especially including companies in the fields of orthopedics, trauma, invasive surgery, and visual devices

• Attracting companies within the medical devices supply chain, in order to consolidate the cluster and expand growth horizons

Workforce advantages in this sector are comparable to that of the pharmaceutical manufacturing subsector.

Agricultural biotechnology. According to PRIDCO, Puerto Rico has emerged as an important center for agricultural biotechnology. There's ongoing research with corn, soy, sorghum, sunflower, cotton, among others since 1983. It is one of the fastest growing sectors and is supported by the following conditions: year around stable weather and environmental conditions, skilled and professional labor, soil quality, proximity to the U.S., rapid transportation system, agricultural academic research centers and intellectual property protection. Pioneer Hi–Bred, BASF Agrochemical, Bayer–Cropscience, Syngenta Seeds and Rice Tec are among many seed companies that have found the island to be fertile ground for R&D. The sector currently concentrates 18% of all agricultural employment (over 2,500 employees). Puerto Rico must become a center for the scientific production and improvement of seeds in Latin America, and it must become a leader in an industry that is slated to grow at 6% per year. Some of the strategies involve:

• Supporting the expansion of production by companies currently doing business in Puerto Rico by preparing personalized offers

• Attracting additional companies in this sector by promoting existing incentives, infrastructure, and talent in Puerto Rico

• Fostering additional research and development in this sector

A highly educated workforce is supported by an array of current programs, including: those offered at the Biotechnology Development and Training Center at the Mayagüez campus of the UPR, which is a public–private initiative that offers customized training programs for students and employees with degrees in science and engineering, as well as for pharmaceutical professionals who want to transition into the life sciences; a five–year bachelor's degree in industrial biotechnology from the UPR, Mayagüez campus, offered for the last 12 years; and Ph.D. programs in biomedical science from the UPR, Medical Sciences campus, and the Ponce School of Medicine/Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico.

Outsourcing. According to PRIDCO, the Island is quickly emerging as a knowledge–services hub both for online monitoring as well as telecommunication–related operations like call centers. Income from outsourcing or expert services at the global level is estimated to be some $600 billion in 2014. The industry is composed of four segments: (1) outsourcing of information technology, (2) outsourcing of business processes, (3) outsourcing of knowledge processes, and (4) outsourcing of engineering and R&D. Some of the strategies involve:

• Creating an outsourcing cluster linking universities, the private sector, and government

• Developing training programs in coordination with universities and companies in this sector, which includes offering students internships in various companies within the sector

• Attracting large operations offering Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) and integrated

outsourcing services through aggressive and personalized promotion

• Promoting the development of local software for eventual export, through promotion of current legislation

• Expanding the aerospace and defense sector, paying special attention to outsourcing in the area of research and development

"Under the Flag" industries. “Under the Flag” businesses as specified in federal legislation (for example, the Buy America Act, the International Traffic in Arms Regulations, etc.), represent over $500 billion at the federal level. Puerto Rico aspires to contact and attract companies dedicated to cyber–security, Big Data, and remote

B. WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the current workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment, as defined in section 3 of WIOA.* This population must include individuals with disabilities among other groups** in the State and across regions identified by the State. This includes: Individuals with barriers to employment include displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14); individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals. ** Veterans, unemployed workers, and youth, and others that the State may identify.

I. EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Provide an analysis of current employment and unemployment data, including labor force participation rates, and trends in the State.

II. LABOR MARKET TRENDS

Provide an analysis of key labor market trends, including across existing industries and occupations.

III. EDUCATION AND SKILL LEVELS OF THE WORKFORCE

Provide an analysis of the educational and skill levels of the workforce.

IV. SKILL GAPS

Describe apparent ‘skill gaps’.

II(A)(1)(B)(I) EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT. PROVIDE AN ANALYSIS OF CURRENT EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT DATA, INCLUDING LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES, AND TRENDS IN THE STATE.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Since 2004, when it peaked, Puerto Rico’s total population has declined uninterruptedly, from 3,826,878 persons in 2004, down to 3,474,182 in 2015. The 2015 estimate, is actually close to that

forecasted in 2014 by the PRPB for 2019. In FY2015, the natural growth of population added just 4,000 individuals while outmigration contributed a net loss close to 65,000 persons (it was 7,650 and minus 55,764, respectively, in FY 2014). By 2025, according to PRPB's estimates, Puerto Rico's population would descend to 3,346,000.

As consequence of an aging population, the proportion of individuals older than 65 in Puerto Rico increased from 11.2% in 2000 to 14.5% in 2010. In that year, life expectancy at birth for Puerto Rico's population was 78.91 years, an increase from the 2000's level of 78.43 years. For males, the life expectancy was 75.07 years and for females it was 82.95.

Birth rate per 1,000 women has declined during the last three decades. Along with this decline, the fecundity rate (that measure the number of women in reproductive age per 100 females) has also declined and further signaling an aging population. On the other hand, the mortality rate has shown a moderate increase throughout these decades. Two of the main factors explaining this increase are heart diseases and the number of homicides in Puerto Rico.

As shown in Table II-1, the median age of Puerto Rico's population has surged form 37.2 in 2010 to 39.3. The age group with the highest number of persons in 2010 was the 15 to 19 year olds while in 2014 it shifted to the 20 to 24 year olds. The age group with the highest population loss was the 10 to 14 year olds; meanwhile, the older population from 65 year olds and over was the age group with the highest increase when compared to 2010. Act 199-2010, known as the Demographic Challenge Act, warned that the lower the birth rate and the higher the growth rate of the older population and higher life-expectancy levels, the slower the economic development of Puerto Rico would become.

TABLE II-1. ESTIMATED POPULATION BY SEX AND AGE, US (2014) AND PUERTO RICO (2014 AND 2010) SOURCE: ACS 2014, 1-YEAR ESTIMATES.

Sex and Age Cohort; US 2014 (as % of total pop.); PR 2014

(as % of total pop.) ; PR 2014; PR 2010; PR 2010-2014 Change (%)

Total population; 318,857,056; 3,548,397;548,397; 3,722,133; -4.67

Male; 49.2; 48.0; 1,704,416; 1,785,26; -4.53

Female; 50.8; 52.0; 1,843,981; 1,936,867; -4.80

Under 5 years; 6.2; 5.2; 184,288; 223,247; -17.45

5 to 9 years; 6.4; 5.9; 208,167; 236,531; -11.99

10 to 14 years; 6.5; 6.6; 234,338; 268,378; -12.68

15 to 19 years; 6.7; 7.1; 252,830; 284,254; -11.05

20 to 24 years; 7.1; 7.6; 268,097; 264,790; 1.25

25 to 34 years; 13.6; 12.1; 430,490; 482,756; -10.83

35 to 44 years; 12.8; 12.9; 458,266 487,539; -6.00

45 to 54 years; 13.6; 13.0; 461,164; 486,273; -5.16

55 to 59 years; 6.7; 6.2; 219,054; 219,460; -0.18

60 to 64 years; 5.9; 6.1; 214,692; 223,184; -3.80

65 to 74 years; 8.3; 10.0; 354,429; 313,604; 13.02

75 to 84 years; 4.3; 5.4; 192,214; 170,712; 12.60

85 years and over; 1.9; 2.0; 70,368; 61,405; 14.60

Median age (years); 37.7; 39.3; 39.3; 37.2; 2.10

The pattern in estimated population change in 2014 was, for the most part, similar to that of Puerto Rico as a whole and evenly distributed among the 15 proposed local workforce areas, as shown in Table II-25. All areas experienced a loss in population across the youth, adults, and older adults' cohorts. Sur Central, La Montaña and Sureste had a proportionately higher loss of youth population while in Carolina, Suroeste and Mayaguez-Las Marías, milder losses happened in cohorts 25 to 64 years old. In terms of adults 65 and older, the largest changes were recorded in La Montaña, Sur Central, Sureste and Noreste, while San Juan recorded the smallest.

TABLE II-2. POPULATION DISTRIBUTION BY LOCAL AREA, SEX AND AGE, 2014, 2010-2014

Local Area; Total 2014; Male (%); Female (%); Change 2010-14 (%); 15 to 24 years 2014; Change 2010-14 (%); 25 to 64 years 2014; Change 2010-14 (%)

Bayamón-Comerío; 221,806; 47.8 52.2 -4.79; 31,82; -6.99; 112,598; -4.71

Caguas-Guayama; 423,748; 47.8; 52.2; -1.71; 60,822; -3.30; 218,337; -1.62

Carolina; 171,310; 46.2; 53.8; -4.49; 24,394; -4.58; 86,341; -6.27

Guaynabo-Toa Baja; 284,200; 47.7; 52.3; -2.39; 40,946; -3.70; 148,902; -2.01

La Montaña; 162,347; 49.2; 50.8; -1.78; 25,737; -4.75; 83,056; -0.41

Manatí-Dorado; 360,958; 48.2; 51.8; -2.11; 52,053; -3.14; 183,003; -2.12

Mayagüez-Las Marías; 94,946; 48.1; 51.9; -6.33; 18,288; -7.21; 43,559; -8.13

Noreste; 236,412; 48.1; 51.9; -2.39; 35,182; -3.12; 118,701; -2.58

Noroeste; 269,634; 48.9; 51.1; -2.87; 37,459; -5.26; 139,274; -3.01

Norte Central; 198,663; 48.8; 51.2; -2.98; 29,130; -5.89; 101,338; -2.37

Ponce; 159,660; 48.2; 51.8; -6.59; 24,284; -9.60; 78,546; -6.54

San Juan; 380,149; 46.0; 54.0; -6.08; 52,487; -8.29; 193,767; -6.25

Sur Central; 169,188; 48.5; 51.5; -1.74; 26,051; -3.69; 85,132; -0.33

Sureste; 244,110; 48.4; 51.6; -1.78; 35,061; -4.98; 126,706; -1.38

Suroeste; 261,834; 48.2; 51.8; -3.52; 36,701; -6.14; 130,085; -4.31

EMPLOYMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT AND LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

Puerto Rico remains the jurisdiction with the highest unemployment among all states, and the only one with a double-digit unemployment rate. Even more significant, Puerto Rico's low labor force participation rate remains not just as the lowest among all jurisdictions but also one of the lowest when compared to any country.

TABLE II-3. AVERAGE LABOR FORCE, PARTICIPATION IN LABOR FORCE AND UNEMPLOYMENT, 2000-2017

FY ; Non-institutionalized civil population 16 years and over (0,000s) ; Labor force (0,000s) ; Labor force participation rate (%) ; Unemployment (0,000s) ; Unemployment rate (%)

2000 ; 2,797 ; 1,292 ; 46.2 ; 142 ; 11

2001 ; 2,808 ; 1,274 ; 45.4 ; 133 ; 10.5

2002 ; 2,842 ; 1,301 ; 45.8 ; 156 ; 12

2003 ; 2,870 ; 1,337 ; 46.6 ; 162 ; 12.1

2004 ; 2,884 ; 1,339 ; 46.4 ; 152 ; 11.4

2005 ; 2,886 ; 1,357 ; 47 ; 144 ; 10.6

2006 ; 2,899 ; 1,410 ; 48.6 ; 156 ; 11

2007 ; 2,906 ; 1,413 ; 48.6 ; 150 ; 10.6

2008 ; 2,908 ; 1,355 ; 46.6 ; 152 ; 11.2

2009 ; 2,910 ; 1,325 ; 45.5 ; 181 ; 13.7

2010 ; 2,915 ; 1,285 ; 44.1 ; 210 ; 16.3

2011 ; 2,914 ; 1,246 ; 42.8 ; 202 ; 16.2

2012 ; 2,901 ; 1,211 ; 41.7 ; 184 ; 15.2

2013 ; 2,882 ; 1,182 ; 41 ; 165 ; 14

2014 ; 2,866 ; 1,162 ; 40.6 ; 167 ; 14.3

2015 ; 2,851 ; 1,138 ; 39.9 ; 148 ; 13

TABLE II-4. POPULATION BY AGE IN LABOR FORCE (%), 2014, 2010, 2005

Age; US 2014; PR 2014; PR 2010; PR 2005

16 years and over; 63.30; 44.50; 47.20; 48.40

16 to 19 years; 37.60; 16.10; 16.80; 22.80

20 to 24 years; 74.10; 51.40; 51.80; 58.30

25 to 44 years; 82.00; 71.80; 73.60; 71.80

45 to 54 years; 79.90; 62.00; 62.60; 58.50

55 to 64 years; 64.20; 33.40; 35.10; 32.90

65 to 74 years; 25.30; 9.50; 10.10; 9.40

75 years and over; 6.30; 2.90; 2.70; 2.70

Source: ACS 2014, 2010, 2005, 1-year estimates.

TABLE II-5. LABOR FORCE, PARTICIPATION IN LABOR FORCE AND UNEMPLOYMENT, BY LOCAL AREA, 1985-2015, 2005-2015, 2015

Period; Labor force (0,000s); Labor force participation rate (%); Unemployment

(0,000s); Unemployment rate (%);

Local area: Bayamón-Comerío

1985-2015; 42,138; 37,774; 4,359; 13.8

2005-2015; 41,476; 37,050; 4,431; 14.1

2015; 36,991; 33,151; 3,840; 13.5

Local area: Caguas-Guayama

1985-2015; 17,856; 15,470; 2,384; 15.3

2005-2015; 19,298; 16,846; 2,456; 14.6

2015; 17,620; 15,518; 2,102; 14.1

Local area: Carolina

1985-2015; 72,105; 65,207; 6,886; 9.6

2005-2015; 72,461; 65,283; 7,169; 10.0

2015; 63,870; 57,814; 6,057; 9.5

Local area: Guaynabo-Toa Baja

1985-2015; 25,316; 23,107; 2,214; 9.9

2005-2015; 28,112; 25,583; 2,522; 9.9

2015; 25,557; 23,414; 2,144; 9.1

Local area: La Montaña

1985-2015; 8,517; 7,279; 1,235; 15.4

2005-2015; 9,646; 8,237; 1,400; 15.1

2015; 9,129; 7,872; 1,257; 14.6

Local area: Manatí-Dorado

85-2015; 9,623; 8,113; 1,516; 16.7

05-2015; 10,113; 8,617; 1,508; 15.9

2015; 8,788; 7,577; 1,210; 14.8

Local area: Mayagüez-Las Marías

85-2015; 17,903; 15,148; 2,754; 16.3

05-2015; 16,014; 13,543; 2,466; 15.9

2015; 13,538; 11,423; 2,115; 18.2

Local area: Noreste

85-2015; 8,292; 6,998; 1,298; 15.4

05-2015; 9,042; 7,701; 1,342; 14.5

2015; 8,571; 7,413; 1,158; 13.1

Local area: Noroeste

85-2015; 12,439; 10,090; 2,348; 19.3

05-2015; 12,937; 10,896; 2,028; 16.1

2015; 10,749; 9,009; 1,740; 16.4

Local area: Norte Central

85-2015; 10713; 8971; 1742; 16.74

05-2015; 11311; 9622; 1690; 15.85

2015; 9640; 8057; 1583; 17.22

Local area: Ponce

85-2015; 58,014; 49,089; 8,928; 15.6

05-2015; 58,877; 51,038; 7,822; 13.5

2015; 49,319; 42,152; 7,167; 14.5

Local area: San Juan

85-2015; 159,195; 144,666; 14,532; 9.2

05-2015; 158,240; 144,524; 13,716; 8.7

2015; 138,638; 127,559; 11,079; 8.0

Local area: Sur Central

85-2015; 9538; 7762; 1848; 20.5

05-2015; 11214; 9273; 1946; 17.8

2015; 10572; 8482; 2090; 20.5

Local area: Sureste

85-2015; 10,480; 8,551; 1,928; 19.8

05-2015; 11,209; 9,293; 1,918; 17.8

2015; 10,191; 8,507; 1,683; 17.5

Local area: Suroeste

85-2015; 8,567; 7,088; 1,503; 18.2

05-2015; 8,857; 7,438; 1,422; 17.0

2015; 7,196; 5,946; 1,250; 17.9

Source: PRDOLHR, LAUS, fiscal years. Not seasonally adjusted.

TABLE II-6. EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRIAL SECTOR AND SELF-EMPLOYMENT AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL EMPLOYMENT, 1990-2015 (5-YEAR INCREMENTS)

Industrial Sector; 1990; 1995; 2000; 2005; 2010; 2015

Agriculture; 3.7; 3.3; 2.1; 2.1; 1.6; 1.6

Construction; 5.7; 5.4; 7.3; 7.0; 5.0; 3.7

Wholesale and Retail Trade; 19.3; 20.0; 20.6; 21.1; 22.0; 24.3

Manufacturing; 17.5; 16.4; 13.7; 11.1; 9.4; 8.4

Finance, Insurance and Real Estate and Rental; 3.1; 3.4; 3.7; 3. ; 3.7; 3.4

Transportation and Warehousing, Information and Utilities; 6.2; 5.7; 4.7; 4.8; 5.3; 4.5

Services; 21.4; 23.7; 26.4; 28.2; 29.7; 33.8

Public Administration; 23.0; 22.1; 21.5; 22.1; 23.2; 20.1

Self-Employment; 14.1; 14.1; 13.8; 13.8; 14.9; 16.5

Source: PRDOLHR, LAUS, fiscal years. Not seasonally adjusted.

INDIVIDUALS WITH BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

DISPLACED HOMEMAKERS

Data are currently unavailable to accurately characterize this group as defined in section 3(16) of WIOA. ACS data estimated unpaid family workers in the population 16 years and older in the labor force to be just over 1,800 individuals in 2014; nevertheless, the PRDOLHR reported that the total domestic laborers accounted for 30.3% of civil non-institutionalized population not in the labor force in December 2015 or, approximately, 509,000 individuals, roughly equivalent to 44% of all individuals in the labor force.

TABLE II-7. WIA DISLOCATED WORKERS' INDICATOR RESULTS FOR DISPLACED HOMEMAKERS, 2013

Indicator: Results

Displaced homemakers withe entered employment: 56

Entered employment rate (%) : 64

Retention rate (%): 80

6-month average earnings ($): 5,417

Source: ETA, WIA Annual Report, 2014.

LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS

The Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP) in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico provides a monthly benefit for food to low-income households that include both cash and noncash portions. Three-fourths (75 percent) of the benefit must be redeemed for eligible food items through electronic benefit transfer (EBT) at certified retailers. The remaining 25 percent may be redeemed in cash. The entire benefit (both the noncash and cash portions) is to be used only for the purchase of eligible food items. With approximately $1.78BN, the program accounted for 28% of all of the Commonwealth's federal grant sources in FY2014.

TABLE II-8. RECEIPT OF FOOD STAMPS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS BY LOCAL AREA, 2014

Area; Households; Received food stamps in the past 12 months; Received food stamps in the past 12 months (%);

United States; 76,958,064; 10,760,879; 14.0

Puerto Rico; 887,662; 343,756; 38.7

Bayamón-Comerío; 56,771; 17,433; 30.7

Caguas-Guayama; 105,208; 36,020; 34.2

Carolina; 45,363; 13,373; 29.5

Guaynabo-Toa Baja; 70,654; 20,463; 29.0

La Montaña; 38,325; 18,939; 49.4

Manatí-Dorado; 64,604; 26,166; 40.5

Mayagüez-Las Marías; 21,666; 8,920; 41.2

Noreste; 55,780; 23,171; 41.5

Noroeste; 65,782; 28,838; 43.8

Norte Central; 74,738; 34,599; 46.3

Ponce; 39,260; 18,169; 46.3

San Juan; 89,103; 27,192; 30.5

Sur Central; 42,429; 19,383; 45.7

Sureste; 58,806; 25,346; 43.1

Suroeste; 59,173; 25,744; 43.5

Source: ACS 2014, 5-year estimates.

TABLE II-9 RECEIPT OF FOOD STAMPS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS BY LOCAL AREA, 2014

Area; Received Food Stamps; Married couple families As % of Total; Married couple families With no workers (%); Single male headed families As % of Total Single male headed families With no workers (%) Single female headed families As % of Total; Single female headed families With no workers, (%);

United States; 10,760,879; 5.2; 15.9; 1.6; 22.5; 7.2; 28.4

Puerto Rico; 343,756; 15.4; 51.3; 4.3; 43.9; 19.0; 58.3

Bayamón-Comerío; 17,433; 11.6; 44.4; 3.0; 47.2; 16.1; 55.4

Caguas-Guayama; 36,020; 13.4; 49.7; 3.9; 37.8; 16.9; 58.5

Carolina 13,373; 7.8; 34.6; 3.0; 27.7; 18.6; 45.1

Guaynabo-Toa Baja; 20,463; 9.7; 45.5; 3.1; 36.3; 16.1; 51.9

La Montaña; 18,939; 22.7; 54.7; 5.6; 45.6; 21.1; 63.0

Manatí-Dorado; 26,166; 17.5; 62.8; 4.5; 57.2; 18.5; 67.1

Mayagüez-Las Marías; 8,920; 13.4; 50.9; 3.6; 49.6; 24.1; 63.9

Noreste; 23,171; 17.0; 48.4; 4.; 35.7; 20.4; 47.9

Noroeste; 28,838; 21.4; 52.9; 5.5; 43.3; 17.0; 64.8;

Norte Central; 34,599; 22.6; 53.7; 5.2; 56.6; 18.5; 62.8;

Ponce; 18,169; 16.2; 44.6; 4.9; 35.8; 25.2; 59.7;

San Juan; 27,192; 6.5; 39.8; 2.8; 36.3; 21.2; 55.1

Sur Central; 19,383; 18.1; 52.1; 6.2; 39.1; 21.3; 55.4

Sureste; 25,346; 18.6; 54.0; 4.9; 48.6; 19.6; 60.0;

Suroeste; 25,744; 19.9; 55.8; 5.2; 49.9; 18.4; 65.3

Source: ACS 2014, 5-year estimates, Receipt of Food Stamps/SNAP

TABLE II-10. WIA TITLE I INDICATOR RESULTS FOR ADULT PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS RECEIVING INTENSIVE OR TRAINING SERVICES, 2013

Indicator: Results

Adult public assistance recipients receiving intensive or training services with entered employment: 183

Entered employment rate (%): 53

Retention rate (%): 89

6-month average earnings ($): 4,963

Source: ETA, WIA Annual Report, 2014.

As per the 70% Lower Living Standard Income Level (LLSIL) threshold for 2015, which amounts to $29,368 in Metro areas and $29,396 in non Metro areas for a family of four, more than half of all families in Puerto Rico will be classified as low-income individuals. The LLSIL threshold exceeded the poverty guidelines issued by the HHS for the jurisdiction.

TABLE II-11. MEDIAN INCOME AND LLSIL BY FAMILY SIZE, 2015 FAMILIES; MEDIAN INCOME ($);USDOL 70% LLSIL; HHS POVERTY GUIDELINE

2-person families; 19,320; 17,350; 15,930

3-person families; 23,833; 23,818; 20,090

4-person families; 27,644; 29,396; 24,250

5-person families; 30,152; 34,693; 28,410

6-person families; 31,165; 40,567; 32,570

7-or-more-person families; 31,108; NA; NA

Source: ACS 2014, 1-year estimates. USDOL, LLSIL 2015 guidelines. PRASDF, 2015 HHS poverty guidelines.

In relation to low-income individuals, we plan to develop policies and procedures for determining underemployment for both adult and dislocated workers, as directed by TEGL 03-15(6).

Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians

According to ACS data (2014, 5-year estimates), there were 11,102 persons of American Indian or Alaskan tribe origin in Puerto Rico.

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING YOUTH WHO ARE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES; INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AMONG OTHER GROUPS IN THE STATE AND ACROSS REGIONS IDENTIFIED BY THE STATE

TABLE II-12. EMPLOYMENT STATUS BY DISABILITY OF POPULATION 16 AND OVER, 2009-2014

Status and Disability Type; 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013; 2014;

Employed population with a disability (%); 8.8; 8.1; 9.1; 8.6; 8.5; 8.6

Hearing difficulty; 4; 4; 4; 4; 4; 4

Vision difficulty; 1; 2; 2; 3; 2; 2

Cognitive difficulty; 3; 3; 3; 2; 3; 3

Ambulatory difficulty; 2; 1; 1; 1; 1; 1

Self-care difficulty; 6; 6; 6; 6; 6; 6

Independent living difficulty; 5; ; 5; 5; 5; 5

Unemployed population with a disability (%); 10.7; 9.5; 11.5; 11.4; 11.4; 11.1

Hearing difficulty; 5; 4; 5; 5; 5; 5

Vision difficulty; 2; 3; 3; 3; 3; 3

Cognitive difficulty; 1; 1; 1; 1; 1; 1

Ambulatory difficulty; 3; 2; 2; 2; 2; 2

Self-care difficulty; 6; 6; 6; 6; 6; 6

Independent living difficulty; 4; 5; 4; 4; 4; 4

Population not in labor force with a disability (%); 31.2; 29.0; 30.0; 30.3; 30.1; 30.4

Hearing difficulty; 6; 6; 6; 6; 6; 6

Vision difficulty; 4; 4; 4; 4; 4; 4

Cognitive difficulty; 3; 2; 2; 2; 2; 2

Ambulatory difficulty; 1; 1; 1; 1; 1; 1

Self-care difficulty; 5; 5; 5; 5; 5; 5

Independent living difficulty; 2; 3; 3; 3; 3; 3

Source: ACS 2009-2014, 1-year estimates.

According to ACS estimates, the share of employed population with a disability in Puerto Rico (8.6% in 2014) is significantly higher than in the US (5.1% in 2014).

The PRVRA service statistics confirm ACS estimates for population 16 and over for the jobseeker population in in terms of distribution by type of disability.

TABLE II-13. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICE CUSTOMERS BY TYPE OF DISABILITY, PY 2015

Type of disability; Category total; As % of all customers

Vision; 2,342; 3.96

Hearing; 1,467; 2.48

Hearing and vision; 3; 0.01

Speech; 362; 0.61

Physical/ambulatory; 7,156; 12.09

Respiratory; 1,051; 1.78

Other physical/ambulatory; 3,886; 6.57

Cognitive; 26,541; 44.86

Psychosocial; 11,966; 20.22

Other mental; 3,084; 5.21

Unidentified; 1,312; 2.21

Total; 59,170; 100.00

Source: PRVRA, Service statistics, PY2015.

TABLE II-14. EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES BY MAJOR OCCUPATIONAL GROUP, PY 2015

SOC Code; Occupational major group; Total employment; As % of all customers;

11; Management; 83; 2.82

13; Business and financial operations; 46; 1.56

15; Computer and mathematical; 23; 0.78

17; Architecture and engineering; 111; 3.77

19; Life, physical and social sciences; 45; 1.53

21; Community and social services; 47; 1.60

23; Legal 13; 0.44

25; Education, training and library; 152; 5.16

27; Art, design, entertainment, sports and media; 85; 2.89

29; Healthcare practitioners and technical; 255; 8.66

31; Healthcare support; 107; 3.64

33; Protective services; 71; 2.41

35; Food preparation and serving related; 297; 10.09

37; Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance; 198; 6.73

39; Personal care and service; 186; 6.32

41; Sales and related; 315; 10.70

43; Office and administrative support; 308; 10.47

45; Farming, fishing and forestry; 17; 0.58

47; Construction and extraction; 53; 1.80

49; Installation, maintenance and repair; 125; 4.25

51; Production; 252; 8.56

53; Transportation and material moving; 101; 3.43

55; Military specific; 13; 0.44

59; Homemaker; 40; 1.36

Total; 2,943

Source: PRVRA, Service statistics, PY2015. Might not add to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE II-15. EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN CIVIL NON-INSTITUTIONALIZED POPULATION, MARCH 2014

Employment Status; Total; Male; Female;

Civil non institutionalized population (0,000s) ; 286; 151; 135

In Labor force (0,000s) ; 7; 4; 3

Participation rate (%); 2.5; 2.7; 2.2

Employed (0,000s) ; 5; 3; 2

Not in labor force (0,000s) ; 280; 148; 132

Source: PRDOLHR, Special survey: persons with disabilities in Puerto Rico, March 2014.

Please, refer to section VI for additional information regarding youth who are individuals with disabilities.

OLDER INDIVIDUALS

As shown in Table II-1, population 55 to 64 dropped slightly between 2010 and 2014, while the population 65 and over rose by more than 13%. According to ACS estimates (see Table II-26, above), the participation in labor force for persons 55 and older in Puerto Rico has stayed at approximately the same level during the past decade; nevertheless, the level of participation in the labor force for persons 55 to 64 years old is about half of that of the rest of the States (64.2% in 2014), dropping to nearly a third, in the 65 to 74 years old cohort. Population aging poses significant challenges in all respects, including workforce development and, particularly, to the efforts aimed at jumpstarting the participation in labor force of the population.

Close to 125 participants benefitted from PRDOLHR's Senior Community Service Employment Program in FY 2015. Additionally, the PRAFC, ascribed to the PRDOF, serviced older adults through the Retired and Seniors Volunteer Program.

EX-OFFENDERS

According to the 2015's Inmate Population Profile completed by the PRDCR, 57% (6,826) of the male inmates were unemployed before entering the correctional system, and the figure jumped to 79% (330) for females. In 2015, 67 service requests were referred to the PRDOLHR for assistance in finding work for inmates that were close to extinguish their sentence (within 120 days).

TABLE II-16. SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INMATE POPULATION, 2015

Characteristics; Male; As % of total count; Female; As % of total count

Count; 12,074; 420;

Could not read; 335; 2.8; 6; 1.4

Had CTE or trade studies; 1,781; 14.8; 64; 15.2

Educational attainment;

K-6th grade; 1,211; 10.0; 32; 7.6

7th-11th grade; 5,019; 41.6; 152; 36.2

High-school diploma or GDE; 4,928; 40.8; 138; 32.9

Some college or Associate degree; 680; 5.6; 37; 8.8

Bachelor’s degree; 166; 1.4; 25; 6.0

Master’s degree or higher; 35; 0.3; 4; 1.0

Employment status prior to reclusion;

Employed; 5,223; 43.3; 90; 21.4

Unemployed; 6,826; 56.5; 330; 78.6

Not in labor force prior to reclusion;

Student; 175; 1.4; 6; 1.4

Disabled person; 126; 1.0; 7; 1.7

Retired person; 29; 0.2; 0; 0.0

Field of previous work experience;

None; 2,686; 22.2; 288; 68.6

Construction; 2,328; 19.3; 6; 1.4

Cleaning and maintenance; 821; 6.8; 9; 2.1

Commerce; 692; 5.7; 9; 2.1

Auto repair and maintenance; 615; 5.1; 3; 0.7

Barber and hairdresser; 386; 3.2; 12; 2.9

Food related; 362; 3.0; 18; 4.3

Retail trade; 268; 2.2; 3; 0.7

Agriculture; 256; 2.1; 2; 0.5

General services; 151; 1.3; 5; 1.2

Protective services; 136; 1.1; 13; 3.1

Technical services; 99; 0.8; 0; 0.0

Illicit activities; 64; 0.5; 1; 0.2

Art and entertainment; 63; 0.5; 0; 0.0

Management; 51; 0.4; 1; 0.2

Health related; 50; 0.4; 17; 4.0

Professional; 36; 0.3; 0; 0.0

Refrigeration; 35; 0.3; 0; 0.0

Computers; 29; 0.2; 2; 0.5

Communications and public relations; 22; 0.2; 2; 0.5

Education related; 19; 0.2; 1; 0.2

Sports related; 12; 0.1; 0; 0.0

Secretarial and administrative support; 9; 0.1; 6; 1.4

Science; 7; 0.1; 1; 0.2

Engineering; 7; 0.1; 0; 0.0

Finance; 4; 0.0; 1; 0.2

Real estate; 3; 0.0; 0; 0.0

Mixed occupations; 180; 1.5; 17; 4.0

Source: PRDCR, Inmate population profile, 2015.

According to the PRDCR, in the preceding two years, 927 total requests for employment assistance for the inmate and juvenile ex-offender population have been processed, including 41 from inmates about (within 120 days) to complete their sentence. Out of these, 280 were filed by ex offenders, and 647 came via referral from the correctional institutions. All 886 cases (excepting those requested by inmates) were referred to the PRDOLHR's case managers and resulted in the outcome of 130 ex-offenders being successfully reinserted in the workforce. The follow-up of cases has consistently posed challenges due to mobility and, in some cases, loss of communication with ex offenders.

Please, refer to section II(a)(2)(A) for a description of workforce activities related to incarcerated individuals and ex-offenders.

HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS, OR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTHS

When compared to the rest of the States, Puerto Rico has the least number of homeless persons "In Families" and homeless Veterans, both as a share of the total homeless population and as a ratio of homeless persons in those categories to total population; nevertheless, is surges to the top in terms of "Chronically Homeless" individuals. These are persons that are either unaccompanied homeless individuals with a disabling condition who has been continuously homeless for a year or more, or unaccompanied individuals with a disabling condition who has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.

TABLE II-17. HOMELESS PERSONS BY CATEGORY, 2010-2015

Years; Total; In Families; Veterans; Chronically Homeless

2015; 4,518; 589; 164; 1,756

2014; 4,132; 700; 87; 2,063

2013; 4,128; 658; 82; 2,130

2012; 3,212; 718; 116; 3,251

2011; 2,900; 554; 137; 3,564

2010; 4,149; 428; NA; 2,218

2009; 4,070; 340; NA; 2,195

2008; 3,012; 344; NA; 2,917

2007; 4,309; 395; NA; 2,904

Source: HUD, Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, 2007-2015.

In the 2013 point-in-time count for the Puerto Rico Balance Continuum of Care, 28% of respondents identified the loss of employment as the main cause for homelessness; 9% had an ambulatory

disability; and 2% a developmental disability. The Adult Education and Family Literacy program served 4 homeless individuals in the school year 2015.

Youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system

The PRAFC administers both the Chafee Education and Training Vouchers Program and the Chafee Foster Care Independent Living.

Youth are enrolled in the Foster Care program at age 14. They must be attending school, must not bear dispositive measures pursuant to Act 88-1986 (Youth Offenders Act), should not have disabling mental health conditions and must be subject to the temporary or permanent custody of the PRDOF. An intermediate program stage comprises individuals age 16 to 18, followed by a completion or exit stage for 19 to 21 year old. Through the stages, training and workshop activities in the independent living program are geared towards preparing participants to face adulthood. Topics involve money management, sex education, violence, rights and responsibilities, as well as moral and spiritual values.

As part of its 2015-2019 Child and Family Service Plan, the PRDOF targeted the youth in transition as a population in greater risk of maltreatment, particularly youth who have been in foster care that face even greater challenges because they have grown up with hardships that constitute risk factors. The Foster Care Independent Living Program empowers the youths in making a satisfactory transition to self-sufficiency by providing a continuum of services that includes: educational and/or vocational training; career planning; job preparation, search and retention and skills development; health and housing services; ability to work as a member of a team; prevention of substance use/abuse (drugs, alcohol & tobacco); activities to develop emotional maturity; counseling to promote management of unresolved emotional problems; violence prevention; skills in identifying and accessing services; parenting skills development; orientation on legal rights and responsibilities; cultural awareness activities; workshops and counseling to develop a sense of moral social responsibility; socialization skills development (conflict resolution, problem solving, anger management, communication skills); and, mentoring.

In FY 2015, the program kept 64 lodges duly licensed and 151 apartments duly certified as safe alternatives for the location of the youth. Residential services are offered through a variety of options. Among these, agency operated facilities including a group home for children with disabilities and a group home for girls.

As described in the 2015-2019 Appendix to the Independent Living State Plan, the Educational Training Vouchers (ETV) program motivates and prepares youth participants to reach and complete their postsecondary educational, or vocational training and technical goals. In FY 2015, through ETV funds, a total of 204 youth individuals enrolled in postsecondary studies; 195 youth individuals received services and training to obtain employment; and 80 got and kept a job for 6 months or more, of which 67 were part-time and 12 full-time.

In regards to employment eligibility in the foster Care program, in FY 2015, it served 2,298 participants 16 years and older that were eligible for employment, and had an outcome of 279 individuals, 21 years or older, that met the permanency plan for age emancipation and were also employed.

Please, refer to section II(a)(2)(A) for a description of workforce activities related to the Foster Care program.

Individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers

According to the Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics, in 2010 (last year surveyed), illiteracy rate among population ages 18 to 34 climbed to 2.7%; 8.2% for ages 35 to 54; and 13.5% for 55 and older. Difficulty in reading is somewhat more common than writing: 2.2%, 5.0% and 12.2% for the referenced age cohorts, respectively, confronted difficulties in writing, compared to 1.9%, 5.8% and 11.5% in reading. Close to three-fourths of adults, albeit number that steeply decreased with aging, expressed their availability to be trained in mathematics, reading and writing to improve their job performance.

Since the language of instruction in Puerto Rico is Spanish (although English language is a required course from 1st to 12th grade) a low degree of proficiency in English language is not uncommon; therefore, English as Second Language is still critical, particularly for adult education participants who need to develop their written and conversational skills.

For further information on individuals who are English language learners, please, refer to sections II(a)(2)(A) and VI for information on program activities under Adult Education and Family Literacy.

Eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14)

Please, refer to the AOP in section VI, below.

Individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program

In December 2015, 9,811 new participants were assisted through TANF, of which 9,315 were females (94.94%) and 496 (5.06%) were males. According to the HHS Office of Family Assistance, the average monthly number of recipients for FY 2015 in Puerto Rico was 30,385, down from 36,421 participants in FY 2010. A total of 3,332 participants completed 36 or more months of participation and thus were within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the TANF program.

As highlighted in the State Plan of Operations (2015-2017), the fact that 59% of poor families are living in female-headed households, and 68.5% of those have children under 18 years old, cause it to be more difficult to connect TANF families to the economic mainstream. Moreover, 80% of female-headed families are dependent on TANF and the Nutritional Assistance Program benefits as their principal sources of income.

TABLE II-18. TANF FAMILIES BY PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAM 2010, 2013

Year; Total families; Medical assistance (%); NAP (%); NAP monthly avg. ($); Subsidized housing (%);

2010; 13,003 ; 99.5; 98.2; 285.57; 29.0

2013; 13,226; 99.4; 99.1; 284; 34.7

Source: HHS, Office of Family Assistance.

TABLE II-19. TANF ADULT RECIPIENTS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT 2010, 2013

Year; Adult Recipients; Less than 10th grade; 10 - 11th grade; 12th grade; More than high school

2010; 11,343; 23.7; 17; 49.4; 9.8

2013; 12,257; 19.7; 14.1; 54.3; 12.0

Source: HHS, Office of Family Assistance.

TABLE II-20. TANF ADULT RECIPIENTS BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS 2010, 2013

Year; Adult Recipients; Male Recipients; Employed (%); Female Recipients; Employed (%)

2010; 11,342; 696; 2.2; 10,646; 2.6

2013; 12,257; 849; 0.6; 11,409; 1.6

Source: HHS, Office of Family Assistance.

As shown below, employment caused over a fifth of all cases closures, which positioned Puerto Rico in 17th place with the highest share of closures due to employment among all jurisdictions in 2010, and in 14th place in 2013.

TABLE II-21. TANF CLOSED-CASE FAMILIES BY REASON FOR CLOSURE 2010, 2013

Year; Total families; Employment; Federal time limit; Voluntary closure; Other

2010; 2,866; 20.0; 5.2; 36.9; 37.8

2013; 15,428 ; 21.6; 5.0; 32.5; 40.9

Source: HHS, Office of Family Assistance.

Please, refer to section III(a)(2)(B) for further information on TANF as a required partner.

Single parents (including single pregnant women)

According to ACS data, in 2014, 11.6% of all households were single-female headed households with children under 18 years of age. That figure expanded four-fold for public housing participants: out of 49,953 households under the State's PHA jurisdiction, 49.75% were single-female headed.

LONG TERM UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

According to ETA data, 2014's total exhaustions were the lowest since 1988, when 47,000 cases were reported. Also, 2015's U-1 underutilization level was at is lowest level since 2008.

TABLE II-22. UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE EXHAUSTIONS, 2006-2014

Years; 2006; 2007; 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013; 2014

Exhaustions; 46,920; 46,820; 48,438; 62,067; 79,910; 58,028; 48,714; 52,957; 41,068

Source: ETA, Unemployment Insurance Financial Data Handbook.

TABLE II-23. ALTERNATIVE MEASURE OF LABOR UNDERUTILIZATION U-1, PERSONS UNEMPLOYED 15 WEEKS OR LONGER, AS A PERCENT OF THE CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE, 2007-2015

2007; 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015

As % of labor force; 1.7; 2.4; 3.9; 4.4; 4.8; 4.0; 3.8; 3.7; 3.3

Source: PRDOLHR, Labor force survey, 2015. Not seasonally adjusted.

OTHER GROUPS: VETERANS

There were 93,240 veterans in Puerto Rico in September 2014, of which 5,331 were females and 58,149 were 65 years and older. By 2020, the veteran population is expected to decrease to 77,028.

TABLE II-24. VETERAN POPULATION BY AGE, SEPTEMBER 2014

Total: 93,240

24 years or less: 1,210

25 to 54: 19,505

55 to 64: 14,376

65 and over: 58,149

Source: VA National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, 2014.

Employment services for disabled veterans are managed by the PRDOLHR. In FY 2015, out of 312 service requests, it achieved an outcome of 110 employed individuals, up from 78 in 2014. The Department also manages the Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) program, through which 600 veterans were serviced in FY 2015, up from 393 in the previous year. It also implements the Disabled Veterans Outreach (DVOP) program, which has a 28% entering employment rate target; 60% employment retention rate target and a six-months average earnings target of $11,302.

II(a)(1)(B)(ii) LABOR MARKET TRENDS. PROVIDE AN ANALYSIS OF KEY LABOR MARKET TRENDS, INCLUDING ACROSS EXISTING INDUSTRIES AND OCCUPATIONS.

DEMOGRAPHICS

TABLE II-25. NET OUTMIGRATION TO STATES, 2007-20144

2007 :Out -- -60,388 :In -- 29,136 : Net -- -31,252

2008 :Out -- -67,862 :In -- 33,734 : Net -- -34,128

2009 :Out -- -62,074 :In -- 32,108 : Net -- -29,966

2010 :Out -- -59,985 :In -- 31,732 : Net -- -28,253

2011 :Out -- -76,218 :In -- 22,649 : Net -- -53,569

2012 :Out -- -74,500 :In -- 20,044 : Net -- -54,456

2013 :Out -- -73,846 :In -- 24,652 : Net -- -49,194

2014 :Out -- -83,844 :In -- 19,771 : Net -- -64,073

Total :Out -- -558,717 :In -- 213,826 : Net -- -344,891

Source: ACS 1-year estimates, 2007-2014.

TABLE II-26. PROFILE OF OUT-MIGRANT TO OTHER STATES, 2010-2013

With post secondary education As % of total out-migrants

:2010 -- 22.96 :2011 -- 26.06 :2012 -- 30.61 :2013 -- 26.51

With post secondary education % with less than bachelor’s degree :2010 -- 49.27 :2011 -- 50.82 :2012 -- 54.92 :2013 -- 55.39

Median age of out-migrants :2010 -- 28.1 :2011 -- 29 :2012 -- 29.3 :2013 -- 28.5

Out-migrants under 35 years old (% of total) :2010 -- 62.14 :2011 -- 62.08 :2012 -- 61.35 :2013 -- 62.33

Source: Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics, Migrant profile report, CY2010-CY2013.

The numbers tend to confirm the hypothesis that Puerto Rican migrants are more closely linked to blue-collar employment than professional or white collar jobs, and thus not representative of a "Brain Drain" but instead of a more generalized and widespread type of out-migration. According to the Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics, in 2013, the net out-migration was higher for the following groups among all occupation groups: Production (3,735, 2nd in 2010 at 2,029); Office and administrative support (2,958, 1st in 2010 at 2,695); Food preparation and service related (2,890); Protective services (1890); Sales and related (1,829, 3rd in 2010 at 2,028); Business and financial operations (1,575); Management (1,416); Personal care (1,398); and, Construction and extraction (1,269).

Puerto Rico’s labor market confronts the detrimental effects of a natural population growth rate nearing zero by 2016-2017; an accelerating out-migration pace; and a labor force participation of 39.9% (ranked globally as one of the lowest by the World Bank). From FY 2010 to FY 2014, Puerto

Rico lost 4.8% of its population. According to the PRDOLHR, by 2050, population 60 and over may represent 37.2% of the total.

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

The Federal Reserve Bank of New York (FRBNY) characterized Puerto Rico's labor market as being "quite weak" (An update in the competitiveness of the Puerto Rican economy, 2014). Along with the wide gap that persists between the unemployment rates of Puerto Rico and the US (13.6% versus 5.1%, respectively, in August 2015), the low rate of participation in labor force, particularly among less educated workers was stressed by the FRBNY as the most important factor in the labor market limiting the island's competitiveness. It further urged to counter skills atrophy through the promotion of work experience and creating jobs and encouraging active participation in the labor market, especially for the young uneducated.

As it was iterated in the "Puerto Rico Fiscal and Economic Growth Plan", issued in September, 2015, by the "Working Group for the Fiscal and Economic Recovery of Puerto Rico", established by Executive Order 2015-022, the FRBNY highlighted the effects of the detrimental load imposed by the minimum wage on the young and relatively unskilled workers (since the wage adds up to close to 80% of per capita income, for a full-time job). The FRBNY concluded that to "the extent that young workers are priced out of the labor market, they will miss out on the opportunity to acquire on-the-job training early in their working lives".

Both entities also identified the "discouraging effects" that federal transfers to individuals could have on labor force participation. Those transfers amounted to 38% of personal income in FY 2014. As previously mentioned (see Table II-41, above), close to 39% of all households received food stamps in 2014, of which 54% had no workers in household and 29% corresponded to female single-headed households. Some research has also identified disability insurance as discouraging, "considering the low earnings of Puerto Rican workers and the high levels of unemployment". The reach of the informal economy, ranging anywhere between 2.5 and 14% of GDP in 2004, is another explanation being offered to account for the low levels of labor participation rates.

GOVERNMENT DOWNSIZING

Government total employment is back to the 1995 level. As shown in Table II-50, below, the Commonwealth's central government has shed close to 75,000 jobs in the last two decades, almost a third, and has caused a drop in the ratio of government employment to total employment of 23.7%. From 2009 to 2015, 56,000 of those 75,000 jobs were lost to the effects of government downsizing policies, more than 20,000 in 2010 alone. According to the PRDOLHR's long-term projections, another 12,890 jobs will be lost by the Commonwealth's central government up to 2022. Furthermore, current fiscal constraints seem adverse to the possibility of expanding employment in the public sector.

TABLE II-27. GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT, 1995-2015

1995 :Total Employment 0,000s -- 914.8 :Govt. 0,000s -- 303.6 : % of Total -- 33.2 :Fed. 0,000s - 14.3 : % of Total -- 4.7 :State 0,000s -- 237.1 : % of Total -- 78.1 :Local 0,000s -- 52.2 : % of Total -- 17.2

1996 :Total Employment 0,000s -- 948.1 :Govt. 0,000s -- 307.5 : % of Total -- 32.4 :Fed. 0,000s - 14.1 : % of Total -- 4.6 :State 0,000s -- 239.9 : % of Total -- 78 :Local 0,000s -- 53.5 17.4

1997 :Total Employment 0,000s -- 989.2 :Govt. 0,000s -- 318.9 : % of Total -- 32.2 :Fed. 0,000s - 14.5 : % of Total -- 4.6 :State 0,000s -- 250 : % of Total -- 78.4 :Local 0,000s -- 54.4 17.1

1998 :Total Employment 0,000s -- 993.2 :Govt. 0,000s -- 309.5 : % of Total -- 31.2 :Fed. 0,000s - 14.5 : % of Total -- 4.7 :State 0,000s -- 241.8 : % of Total -- 78.1 :Local 0,000s -- 53.2 17.2

1999 :Total Employment 0,000s -- 1004.4 :Govt. 0,000s -- 302.2 : % of Total -- 30.1 :Fed. 0,000s - 15.2 : % of Total -- 5 :State 0,000s -- 234.1 : % of Total -- 77.5 :Local 0,000s -- 52.9 17.5

2000 :Total Employment 0,000s -- 1017.1 :Govt. 0,000s -- 286.1 : % of Total -- 28.1 :Fed. 0,000s - 18.2 : % of Total -- 6.3 :State 0,000s -- 217.1 : % of Total -- 75.9 :Local 0,000s -- 50.9 17.8

2001 :Total Employment 0,000s -- 1021.1 :Govt. 0,000s -- 282.7 : % of Total -- 27.7 :Fed. 0,000s - 15 : % of Total -- 5.3 :State 0,000s -- 212 : % of Total -- 75 :Local 0,000s -- 55.7 19.7

2002 :Total Employment 0,000s -- 1003.5 :Govt. 0,000s -- 288.7 : % of Total -- 28.8 :Fed. 0,000s - 14.5 : % of Total -- 5 :State 0,000s -- 216.1 : % of Total -- 74.9 :Local 0,000s -- 58.1 20.1

2003 :Total Employment 0,000s -- 1011.7 :Govt. 0,000s -- 297.7 : % of Total -- 29.4 :Fed. 0,000s - 15.2 : % of Total -- 5.1 :State 0,000s -- 226.2 : % of Total -- 76 :Local 0,000s -- 56.3 18.9

2004 :Total Employment 0,000s -- 1036.3 :Govt. 0,000s -- 303.4 : % of Total -- 29.3 :Fed. 0,000s - 15.2 : % of Total -- 5 :State 0,000s -- 229 : % of Total -- 75.5 :Local 0,000s -- 59.3 19.5

2005 :Total Employment 0,000s -- 1053.3 :Govt. 0,000s -- 307.8 : % of Total -- 29.2 :Fed. 0,000s - 14.9 : % of Total -- 4.8 :State 0,000s -- 229.9 : % of Total -- 74.7 :Local 0,000s -- 63.1 20.5

2006 :Total Employment 0,000s -- 1051.2 :Govt. 0,000s -- 302.5 : % of Total -- 28.8 :Fed. 0,000s - 14.8 : % of Total -- 4.9 :State 0,000s -- 225.5 : % of Total -- 74.6 :Local 0,000s -- 62.1 20.5

2007 :Total Employment 0,000s -- 1036.1 :Govt. 0,000s -- 298.1 : % of Total -- 28.8 :Fed. 0,000s - 14.6 : % of Total -- 4.9 :State 0,000s -- 221.6 : % of Total -- 74.3 :Local 0,000s -- 61.9 20.8

2008 :Total Employment 0,000s -- 1024.2 :Govt. 0,000s -- 297.7 : % of Total -- 29.1 :Fed. 0,000s - 14.8 : % of Total -- 5 :State 0,000s -- 218.4 : % of Total -- 73.4 :Local 0,000s -- 64.5 21.7

2009 :Total Employment 0,000s -- 996 :Govt. 0,000s -- 300.7 : % of Total -- 30.2 :Fed. 0,000s - 15.1 : % of Total -- 5 :State 0,000s -- 218.5 : % of Total -- 72.7 :Local 0,000s -- 67.1 22.3

2010 :Total Employment 0,000s -- 943.3 :Govt. 0,000s -- 276.5 : % of Total -- 29.3 :Fed. 0,000s - 16.6 : % of Total -- 6 :State 0,000s -- 197.8 : % of Total -- 71.5 :Local 0,000s -- 62.1 22.5

2011 :Total Employment 0,000s -- 923.6 :Govt. 0,000s -- 260 : % of Total -- 28.2 :Fed. 0,000s - 15 : % of Total -- 5.8 :State 0,000s -- 185.3 : % of Total -- 71.3 :Local 0,000s -- 59.7 23

2012 :Total Employment 0,000s -- 931.3 :Govt. 0,000s -- 258.4 : % of Total -- 27.7 :Fed. 0,000s - 14.5 : % of Total -- 5.6 :State 0,000s -- 184.1 : % of Total -- 71.2 :Local 0,000s -- 59.9 23.2

2013 :Total Employment 0,000s -- 937.2 :Govt. 0,000s -- 254.6 : % of Total -- 27.2 :Fed. 0,000s - 14.3 : % of Total -- 5.6 :State 0,000s -- 179.8 : % of Total -- 70.6 :Local 0,000s -- 60.5 23.8

2014 :Total Employment 0,000s -- 916.8 :Govt. 0,000s -- 238 : % of Total -- 26 :Fed. 0,000s - 13.8 : % of Total -- 5.8 :State 0,000s -- 169 : % of Total -- 71 :Local 0,000s -- 55.2 23.2

2015 :Total Employment 0,000s -- 906.2 :Govt. 0,000s -- 231.6 : % of Total -- 25.6 :Fed. 0,000s - 14.1 : % of Total -- 6.1 :State 0,000s -- 162.5 : % of Total -- 70.2 :Local 0,000s -- 55 23.8

Source: PRDOLHR, Labor force survey, 1995-2015. Not seasonally adjusted.

OCCUPATIONS

In terms of occupations, the largest number of jobs added between 2010 and 2014 went for Retail Salespersons (41-2031), with 5,100. As shown in Table II-19, the occupation with the largest expansion, among those that added the most jobs was Personal Care Aides (39-9021), almost tripling. Among those that added the most jobs, Teacher Assistants (25-9041) is the one requiring a postsecondary credential with largest number added; Industrial Engineering Technicians (17-3026), the one requiring Associate's Degree; Special Education Teachers (25-2059), the one requiring Bachelor's Degree, followed by Postsecondary Vocational Education Teachers (25-1194) requiring a Master's. Electrical and Electronic Equipment Assemblers (51-2022) had the largest increase in hourly wages with 21%, followed by Pharmacy Technicians (29-2052) with 11.5%.

On the flip side, Elementary School Teachers Except Special Education (25-2021), Secondary School Teachers Except Special and Career/Technical Education (25-2031), Kindergarten and Elementary School Special Education Teachers (25-2052), and All Other Postsecondary Teachers (25-1199), were among the five occupations with the largest losses in jobs count for the period. The drop is mainly attributable to PRDE's and central government's downsizing through retirement incentives. This is also consistent with the recent spike in educational services UI claimants. When those occupations are discounted, the largest drops were posted for Food Preparation Workers (35-2021) losing 7270; All Other Business Operations Specialists (13-1199) with 4,320; and Team Assemblers (51-2092) with 3,840. All lost close to 40% of their respective laborers.

As shown below, from June 2012 to 2015, unemployment claims by age groups shifted 6% of the share that, for the most part, has remained identical since 2009, from the cohorts of claimants under 35 years old to that of 35 and over. By a similar percentage, the proportion of claimants changed by gender, between 2009 and 2012, in favor of females. It has remained steady since. By occupation group, public administration shows the steepest decline in its share of total claimants, from 13% in 2009 to 4.1% in 2015; manufacturing also dropped from 12.5% to 7.3%. As mentioned, in June 2015, the largest share of claims went to educational services, with almost a fifth of total claims.

II(a)(1)(B)(iii) EDUCATION AND SKILL LEVELS OF THE WORKFORCE. PROVIDE AN ANALYSIS OF THE EDUCATIONAL AND SKILL LEVELS OF THE WORKFORCE.

According to ACS estimates, 28% of population 25 and over did not have a High School diploma in 2014, and close to two-thirds of those completed less than 9th grade. The proportion without HS diploma is slightly higher for males (30.2%) than for females (26.2%). HS completers or with GDE amounted to 26.8% of the population 25 years and over, while the gender proportions reached 29.6% for males and 24.3% females.

Median educational attainment in 2014 among civilian population 16 years and older was 12.9 years of study, and 75.9% completed high school. For those in the labor force, the median rose to 13.2 years. For those who did not finish high school, the participation rate in the labor market was below 20.0%, followed by those with a high school diploma, with 37.6%. Those with 13 or more years of school, had an average participation rate of 54.9%.

The participation rate increased consistently with educational level. The difference in the participation rate among those with a high school diploma and some college is the largest, being almost 20%.

In terms of unemployment rates by education level, those with a high school diploma had a rate of 17.2%, followed by those with at least a year of postsecondary education with 16.1%, an associate degree or CTE at 14.4%, and 8.7% among those with a bachelor's degree. The fact that the participation rates increase and unemployment rates decreased as educational level increased indicates that the educational attainment has a significant effect on the employment status of people in Puerto Rico, and thus should be a prominent strategy in curbing low participation rates and lowering unemployment.

TABLE II-28. PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION 25 YEARS AND OVER BY SEX AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, 2014

Population 25 years and over :Male -- 1,125,525 :Female -- 1,305,950 :Total -- 2,431,475

Less than HS graduate (%) :Male -- 30.2 :Female -- 26.2 :Total -- 28

HS graduate or GDE (%) :Male -- 29.6 :Female -- 24.3 :Total -- 26.8

Some college or associate's degree (%) :Male -- 20.9 :Female -- 22.2 :Total -- 21.6

Bachelor's degree or higher (%) :Male -- 19.3 :Female -- 27.3 :Total -- 23.6

Source: ACS 5-year estimates, 2014.

In terms of postsecondary education, 23.6% attained higher education, while 21.6% got some college, vocational education or associate degree. Females outnumbered males in both groups and by almost three times the number of graduates of middle-skilled education in higher education. In contrast, in 2014, according to OES data, 28.4% of occupied jobs required no credential, 41.6% required high school diploma or equivalent, only 7.7% required post-secondary credentials lower than a bachelor's degree, and 22.3% required bachelor or a higher degree.

Educational attainment for population 25 years and over in the proposed local workforce areas have minor variations along one prevalent trend: the concentration of population with highest attainment levels in the local areas that comprise the San Juan Metropolitan area.

TABLE II-29. PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION 25 YEARS AND OVER BY LOCAL AREA AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, 2014

Local Area

Bayamón-Comerío :Population 25 years and over -- 151,202 :Less than HS graduate (%) -- 30.75 :HS graduate or GDE (%) -- 26.8 :Some college or associate's degree (%) -- 23.15 :Bachelor's degree or higher (%) -- 19.3

Caguas-Guayama :Population 25 years and over -- 281,972 :Less than HS graduate (%) -- 26.33 :HS graduate or GDE (%) -- 28.88 :Some college or associate's degree (%) -- 21.16 :Bachelor's degree or higher (%) -- 23.71

Carolina :Population 25 years and over -- 116,777 :Less than HS graduate (%) -- 18 :HS graduate or GDE (%) -- 25.6 :Some college or associate's degree (%) -- 27.7 :Bachelor's degree or higher (%) -- 28.8

Guaynabo-Toa Baja :Population 25 years and over -- 190,460 :Less than HS graduate (%) -- 23.03 :HS graduate or GDE (%) -- 25.75 :Some college or associate's degree (%) -- 22.8 :Bachelor's degree or higher (%) -- 28.43

La Montaña :Population 25 years and over -- 104,576 :Less than HS graduate (%) -- 31.68 :HS graduate or GDE (%) -- 30.04 :Some college or associate's degree (%) -- 21.12 :Bachelor's degree or higher (%) -- 17.14

Manatí-Dorado :Population 25 years and over -- 175,003 :Less than HS graduate (%) -- 33.29 :HS graduate or GDE (%) -- 27.48 :Some college or associate's degree (%) -- 21.69 :Bachelor's degree or higher (%) -- 17.74

Mayagüez-Las Marías :Population 25 years and over -- 61,463 :Less than HS graduate (%) -- 38.05 :HS graduate or GDE (%) -- 29.35 :Some college or associate's degree (%) -- 14.6 :Bachelor's degree or higher (%) -- 18

Noreste :Population 25 years and over -- 154,874 :Less than HS graduate (%) -- 29.29 :HS graduate or GDE (%) -- 32.72 :Some college or associate's degree (%) -- 21.1 :Bachelor's degree or higher (%) -- 16.86

Noroeste :Population 25 years and over -- 182,734 :Less than HS graduate (%) -- 35.56 :HS graduate or GDE (%) -- 25.83 :Some college or associate's degree (%) -- 19.43 :Bachelor's degree or higher (%) -- 18.8

Norte Central :Population 25 years and over -- 196,294 :Less than HS graduate (%) -- 34.24 :HS graduate or GDE (%) -- 26.2 :Some college or associate's degree (%) -- 20.51 :Bachelor's degree or higher (%) -- 18.71

Ponce :Population 25 years and over -- 105,182 :Less than HS graduate (%) -- 27 :HS graduate or GDE (%) -- 28.9 :Some college or associate's degree (%) -- 19.2 :Bachelor's degree or higher (%) -- 24.9

San Juan :Population 25 years and over -- 263,116 :Less than HS graduate (%) -- 22.8 :HS graduate or GDE (%) -- 20.9 :Some college or associate's degree (%) -- 22.1 :Bachelor's degree or higher (%) -- 34.2

Sur Central :Population 25 years and over -- 108,185 :Less than HS graduate (%) -- 30.62 :HS graduate or GDE (%) -- 31.34 :Some college or associate's degree (%) -- 19.04 :Bachelor's degree or higher (%) -- 19.04

Sureste :Population 25 years and over -- 162,797 :Less than HS graduate (%) -- 31 :HS graduate or GDE (%) -- 29.89 :Some college or associate's degree (%) -- 21 :Bachelor's degree or higher (%) -- 18.1

Suroeste :Population 25 years and over -- 176,840 :Less than HS graduate (%) -- 34.19 :HS graduate or GDE (%) -- 29.97 :Some college or associate's degree (%) -- 17.58 :Bachelor's degree or higher (%) -- 18.26

Puerto Rico :Population 25 years and over -- 2,431,475 :Less than HS graduate (%) -- 28 :HS graduate or GDE (%) -- 26.8 :Some college or associate's degree (%) -- 21.6 :Bachelor's degree or higher (%) -- 23.6

Source: ACS 5-year estimates, 2014.

The relation between the progression in educational attainment and poverty status is telling in terms of gender. A significant improvement in poverty status is achieved by males from non-HS level to HS, by experimenting a 20% decrease in poverty status, and 15% successively when progressing onto postsecondary and higher education levels. Meanwhile, for females, the step down in poverty status from non-HS to HS comes to just 11%, with a further 8% when attaining post-secondary education lower than a bachelor's degree. As shown in Table II-54, below, for females, the leap comes only after higher education attainment when the drop in poverty status equals an additional 25% in relation to just attaining post-secondary education below a bachelor's degree. Nevertheless, still at this level males fare 1.5 times better.

TABLE II-30. POVERTY RATE OF POPULATION 25 YEARS AND OVER FOR WHOM POVERTY STATUS IS DETERMINED BY SEX AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, 2014

Population 25 years and over :Male -- 1,125,525 :Female -- 1,305,950

Less than HS graduate (%) :Male -- 60.2 63.4

HS graduate or GDE (%) :Male -- 40 52.4

Some college or associate's degree (%) :Male -- 25.4 40.3

Bachelor's degree or higher (%) :Male -- 10.9 15.3

Source: ACS, 5-year estimates, 2014.

A similar gender bias arises when considering the improvement in median earnings by school attainment. In relation to earnings is also worth noting that the increase resulting from obtaining a high-school diploma or equivalent is 62% larger than that resulting from further obtaining a post-secondary credential lower than a bachelor's degree.

TABLE II-31. MEDIAN EARNINGS ($) OF POPULATION 25 YEARS AND OVER BY SEX AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, 2014

Population 25 and over :Male -- $17,936 :Female -- $18,595 :Total -- $18,262

Less than HS graduate :Male -- $11,493 :Female -- $9,596 :Total -- $10,891

HS graduate or GDE :Male -- $15,509 :Female -- $13,564 :Total -- $14,902

Some college or associate's degree :Male -- $19,169 :Female -- $16,265 :Total -- $17,373

Bachelor's degree :Male -- $30,771 :Female -- $24,189 :Total -- $26,135

Source: ACS, 5-year estimates, 2014.

Among youth population, 16 to 24 years, the proportion with school attainment less than high school or equivalent is less than half of that of adults.

TABLE II-32. PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION 16 TO 24 YEARS BY SEX AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, 2014

Population 16 to 24 :Male -- 187,587 :Female -- 183,613 :Total -- 371,200

Less than HS graduate (%) :Male -- 17 :Female -- 10.7 :Total -- 13.9

HS graduate or GDE (%) :Male -- 32.4 :Female -- 25.1 :Total -- 28.8

Some college or associate's degree (%) :Male -- 46.4 :Female -- 55.3 :Total -- 50.8

Bachelor's degree or higher (%) :Male -- 4.2 :Female -- 8.9 :Total -- 6.5

Source: ACS 5-year estimates, 2014.

Among youth, attainment by local area iterates the concentration of higher education in the Metropolitan Area of San Juan, with Noreste having the lowest percentage. Postsecondary education below a bachelor's degree tends to be more widespread in its geographical distribution, with Norte Central and Carolina having the largest percentage of youth in this attainment level.

TABLE II-33. PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION 16 TO 24 YEARS BY LOCAL AREA AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, 2014

Local Area; Population 16 to 24 years; Less than HS graduate (%); HS graduate or GDE; Some college or associate's degree; Bachelor's degree or higher

Bayamón-Comerío; 22,626; 12.40; 30.80; 50.50; 6.30

Caguas-Guayama; 42,084; 11.96; 33.76; 48.21; 6.08

Carolina; 17,118; 8.90; 26.70; 57.40; 7.10

Guaynabo-Toa Baja; 28,538; 13.98; 29.25; 49.03; 7.78

La Montaña; 17,897; 11.74; 35.02; 47.12; 6.10

Manatí-Dorado; 26,550; 17.89; 29.06; 47.91; 5.16

Mayagüez-Las Marías; 14,625; 23.55; 28.35; 41.70; 6.40

Noreste; 24,356; 14.09; 33.70; 49.08; 3.10

Noroeste; 25,689; 17.24; 23.89; 51.19; 7.69

Norte Central; 29,504; 13.95; 23.34; 57.80; 4.90

Ponce; 17,216; 13.40; 30.50; 48.40; 7.60

San Juan; 37,790; 14.70; 26.40; 49.60; 9.20

Sur Central; 17,583; 13.12; 34.64; 47.08; 5.12

Sureste; 24,245; 15.14; 31.00; 48.60; 5.26

Suroeste; 25,379; 17.08; 28.84; 48.13; 5.99

Puerto Rico; 371,200; 13.90; 28.80; 50.80; 6.50

Source: ACS 5-year estimates, 2014.

As reported by the PRDE, for FY 2015, dropout rates for the statewide public school system came up to 0.87%; with 0.81% (1,084 out of 133,951) for grades 7th to 9th, and 2.95% (2,857 out of 96,898 students) for 10th to 12th. The school district with the highest dropout rate was Mayagüez (at 1.52%), which also comprises the municipalities of Hormigueros and Maricao, in addition to those of Mayaguez and Las Marías in the local workforce area. The Ponce school district had the highest rate among 10th to 12th graders with 4.73%, followed by Mayaguez with 4.61%, and Canóvanas (comprising the municipalities of Canóvanas, Loíza, Luquillo and Río Grande, a subset of Noreste local area) at 4.19%.

From academic year 2012 to 2015, there was a decreased of 13,519 career and technical education students, albeit there was an increase of 39 new institutions created in that period. The drop in graduates was more than double for females (7,992) than for males (3,762). Among local workforce areas, the largest drop in graduates was located in San Juan, which amassed close to two-thirds of the aggregate loss for all areas. Caguas-Guayama had the largest increase among the areas than gained in career and technical graduates.

TABLE II-34. CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION GRADUATES BY SEX AND LOCAL AREA, 2014-2015

Local Area; CTE Institutions; Male Graduates; Female Graduates; Total Graduates; Change in graduates 2012-2015

Bayamón-Comerío; 37; 3,446; 3,695; 7,141; 571

Caguas-Guayama; 35; 5,172; 5,127; 10,299; 887

Carolina; 14 ; 1,255; 1,355; 2,610; -374

Guaynabo-Toa Baja; 8; 1,025; 273; 1,298; -1,185

La Montaña; 10; 737; 834; 1,571; -387

Manatí-Dorado; 15; 1,402; 1,295; 2,697; -1,825

Mayagüez-Las Marías; 19; 1,266; 1,228; 2,494; 347

Noreste; 12; 752; 1,023; 1,775; 168

Noroeste; 26; 1,604; 1,470; 3,074; -246

Norte Central; 25; 1,263; 2,034; 3,297; -1,027

Ponce; 24; 1,649; 1,454; 3,103; -1,520

San Juan; 68; 3,407; 4,300; 7,707; -7,581

Sur Central; 9; 307; 542; 849; -358

Sureste; 12; 384; 632; 1,016; -655

Suroeste; 19; 790; 1,095; 1,885; -334

Puerto Rico; 333; 24,459; 26,357; 50,816; -13,519

Source: PRCE: PLEDUC, academic year 2014-15.

In terms of its effects on nontraditional employment, the gender distribution of individuals enrolled in career and technical education, and meeting the threshold of less than 25% for either gender, is noticeable for some instructional programs. According to the PREC, occupations in Architecture and engineering, Education, training and library services, Healthcare support, Protective services, Construction and extraction, Installation, maintenance and repair, and Transportation and Materials moving, were significantly skewed by gender.

TABLE II-35. CTE GRADUATES BY SEX, 2013-2014

CIP Code 51 Health professions and related programs :Total graduates -- 7,380 :Male -- 24.4 :Female -- 75.6

CIP Code 47 Mechanic and repair technologies/technicians :Total graduates -- 3,259 :Male -- 95.1 4.9

CIP Code 15 Engineering technologies and engineering-related fields :Total graduates -- 1,151 :Male -- 95.5 4.5

CIP Code 46 Construction trades :Total graduates -- 833 :Male -- 96.4 3.6

CIP Code 19 Family and consumer sciences/human sciences :Total graduates -- 715 :Male -- 9.4 90.6

CIP Code 37 Personal awareness and self-improvement :Total graduates -- 541 :Male -- 3.5 96.5

CIP Code 11 Computer and information sciences and support services :Total graduates -- 408 :Male -- 76 24

CIP Code 48 Precision production :Total graduates -- 197 :Male -- 98 2

CIP Code 10 Communications technologies/technicians and support services :Total graduates -- 133 :Male -- 94 6

CIP Code 40 Physical sciences :Total graduates -- 130 :Male -- 99.2 0.8

CIP Code 1 Agriculture, agriculture operations and related sciences :Total graduates -- 38 :Male -- 10.5 89.5

CIP Code 54 History :Total graduates -- 30 :Male -- 23.3 76.7

CIP Code 14 Engineering :Total graduates -- 19 :Male -- 100 0

CIP Code 45 Social sciences :Total graduates -- 18 :Male -- 22.2 77.8

CIP Code 49 Transportation and materials moving :Total graduates -- 12 :Male -- 91.7 8.3

IV. SKILL GAPS - DESCRIBE APPARENT ‘SKILL GAPS’..

A bachelor degree or higher credential was required for 3 out of every 4 occupations requiring postsecondary education in 2014. Close to 63% required no formal credential or attainment beyond high school or equivalent. The requirement of bachelor degree or higher drops to less than 2 in 3 for 2022 projected job openings. However, a bachelor’s degree or higher attainment represented less than a third of total postsecondary completions in FY 2014. In fact, education in the middle–skilled level of postsecondary education has grown exponentially in the past decade, going from just under 7,000 graduates in FY 2001 to almost 28,000 in FY 2014; career and technical education has also climbed from close to 10,000 graduates in FY 2006 to more than 34,000 in FY 2014.

Comparatively, State funding for CTE in FY 2015 was less than one–tenth of that of higher education: $87.4 million and $931.5, respectively.

Following data shows statistic of the educational attainment, completions and required educational level by occupations and job openings in 2014, and projected to 2022 (Source: PREC, PLEDUC–CES 2013–2014. USDOL, OES 2014. PRDOLHR, Long–term occupation projections: 2012–2022).

1. Completions by Educational Level FY 2014 were: High school or less, or no formal credential NA: Post–secondary education, less than bachelor's degree 53,586; Bachelor's degree or higher 27,468. 2. Occupations requiring by education level in May 2014 were: High school or less, or no formal credential 571,290; Post–secondary education, less than bachelor's degree 76,430; Bachelor's degree or higher 255,210. 3. Projected job openings for 2022 by educational level are: High school or less, or no formal credential 271,062; Post–secondary education, less than bachelor's degree 30,617; Bachelor's degree or higher 55,864

A skills gap approximation was derived from correlating occupational data (OES estimates for 2014), new and replacement growth (PRDOLHR's Long–Term Projections 2012–2022) and post–secondary completions (PREC, 2010–2014), via cross–walking two–digit CIP Codes to SOC Codes, purging duplicates and weighing against projected job openings. An estimation of the projected gap between post–secondary completions and projected openings was reached for 2012–2022, as shown below:

Next breakdown shows statistic of Postsecondary Skills and Occupations Gap Estimation, 2014–2022 (Source: PRDOLHR, Long–Term Projections, 2010–2022; OES, 2014; CEPR–PLEDUC, 2013–2014)

Occupation title: Education attainment: Lag Surplus

1) Managers, All Other: Bachelor's degree: –12,576

2) Accountants and Auditors: Bachelor's degree: –5,270

3) Heavy and Tractor–Trailer Truck Drivers: Postsecondary nondegree award: –3,733

4) Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education: Bachelor's degree: –3,127

5) Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks:Some college, no degree:–2,420

6) Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education:Bachelor's degree:–1,913

7) General and Operations Managers:Bachelor's degree:–1,595

8) Financial Managers:Bachelor's degree:–937

9) Library Technicians:Postsecondary nondegree award:–837

10) Community and Social Service Specialists, All Other:Master's degree:–717

11) Teacher Assistants:Some college, no degree:44,777

12) Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses:Postsecondary nondegree award:37,106

13) Dental Assistants:Postsecondary nondegree award:19,018

14) Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics:Postsecondary nondegree award:18,039

15) Skincare Specialists:Postsecondary nondegree award:16,536

16) Medical Records and Health Information Technicians:Postsecondary nondegree award:15,769

17) Vocational Education Teachers, Postsecondary:Bachelor's degree:13,584

18) Human Resources Assistants, Except Payroll and Timekeeping:Associate's degree:10,241

19) Funeral Service Managers:Associate's degree:9,406

20) Occupational Health and Safety Specialists:Bachelor's degree:8,829

Due to outmigration trends, a study commissioned by the PRDH set out to estimate the needs for physicians. The study (The Demand and Supply of Physicians in Puerto Rico: historical trends and forecasting 2013 to 2019), forecasted no shortage of physicians between 2016 and 2019, but instead a surplus of 601 physicians. In terms of Primary Care Physicians, the forecasted values would result in a surplus of 283 for the period.

The difference between the number of new professional licenses issued and the number of completions in related major instructional programs might reflect the pattern in certain occupations which historically have had a significant share of students accessing higher education in other States.

2. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the workforce development activities, including education and training in the State, to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, as identified in *Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce* above, and the employment needs of employers, as identified in *Employers' Employment Needs* above. This must include an analysis of –

A. THE STATE'S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Provide an analysis of the State's workforce development activities, including education and training activities of the core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required and optional one-stop delivery system partners.*

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* Required one-stop partners: In addition to the core programs, the following partner programs are required to provide access through the one-stops: Career and Technical Education (Perkins), Community Services Block Grant, Indian and Native American programs, HUD Employment and Training programs, Job Corps, Local Veterans' Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program, National Farmworker Jobs program, Senior Community Service Employment program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (unless the Governor determines TANF will not be a required partner), Trade Adjustment Assistance programs, Unemployment Compensation programs, and YouthBuild.

State government entities

The Commonwealth's workforce development activities comprise, among other ancillary activities or programs related to worker's insurance, safety or benefits, the following programs targeting occupational education and training and job promotion:

BREAKDOWN STATE ADMINISTERED WORKFORCE PROGRAMS BY WIOA TYPE

Entity and Programs

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE, NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE (AMERICORPS)

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMERCE: Workforce Development Program (Adult, Youth and Dislocated Workers, Rapid Response Office, Trade Adjustment Assistance Program, Youth Development Program) Juvempleo, Government Internships Program

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND HUMAN RESOURCES: Vocational Rehabilitation Administration (Vocational Rehabilitation services, Program for the Blind and Persons with Physical, Mental and Developmental Disabilities);

Secretariat for Training and Promotion of Employment: Bureau for the Promotion of Job Opportunities (Employment and Training Opportunities Development Program), Bureau of Training, Employment and Entrepreneurial Development (Youth Summer Jobs Program, Internship Program,

Diverse Occupations Program, Training in Entrepreneurial Development Programs, Furniture Manufacturing Internship, Microenterprise Program (Pa' mi gente)

Bureau of Vocational Education: Career and Technical Education Program, Post–secondary Education Program, Bridge Education Programs, Basic Education for Adults Program, Alternate School Programs.

Secretariat for Worker's Benefits: Bureau of Worker's Benefits and Employment Security (Unemployment insurance program, Employment service, Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment Program, Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program, Foreign Labor Certification Program, Interstate Employment Offers Program, Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Programs, Senior Community Service Employment Program, Disabled Veterans Outreach Program, Local Veterans Employment Representatives, Transition Assistance Program, Employment Services for Students)

Secretariat for Planning, Research and Development; Labor Market Information system

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Auxiliary Secretariat for Community Education Services

Adult Education Program

Adult Education and Family Literacy Program

Juvenile Offenders Education Program

Corrections Education (section 225)

English Literacy and Civics Education Program

Community Integrated Services

Auxiliary Secretariat for Career and Technical Education

Puerto Rico Technological Institute (Carl D. Perkins)

Vocational and Technical Education Program (Carl D. Perkins)

Auxiliary Secretariat for Special Education

Pre–Employment Transition services (coordination with PRVRA)

Library Information Services Program

Information Systems and Teachers' Technological Support

K–12+ Longitudinal Information System

Puerto Rico Research Alliance for Dropout Prevention

DEPARTMENT OF THE FAMILY

Administration for the Socioeconomic Development of Families

Operational Services; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; Economic and Social Rehabilitation Program, Nutritional Assistance Program

Administration for Families and Children: Auxiliary Administration for Foster Care and Adoption, State Foster Care and Independence Program, Chafee Educational and Training Voucher Program, Auxiliary Administration for Community Prevention Services, Community Services Block Grant Program, Administration of Services for Older and Disabled Persons: Retired and Senior Volunteer Program

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING: Public Housing Administration (Entrepreneurship and Self–sufficiency Development Division, Entrepreneurship Program, Employment Program, Section 3 Program)

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS: Community Development Block Grant

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND REHABILITATION: Office of Pre–trial Services, Administration of Correctional Institutions and Services to Inmates and Youth Offenders

EDUCATION COUNCIL: Licensing of Post–secondary Educational Institutions, Research and Statistics, Student Financial Assistance Programs

UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO: Puerto Rico Assistive Technology Program

OFFICE OF THE ADVOCATE OF THE PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES: Division for the Protection and Advocacy of Disabled Persons (Committee for the Employment Opportunities for Disabled Persons, Integrated Workforce Compliance Information System, Client Assistance Program)

PLANNING BOARD: State Council on Developmental Deficiencies, Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee

NATIONAL GUARD YOUTH CHALLENGE

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH: Office of Regulation and Certification of Health Professionals, Medical Licensure and Disciplinary Board

DEPARTMENT OF STATE: Auxiliary Secretariat of State Examining Boards

JOB CORPS (FEDERALLY–RUN)

Other activities by State entities

Professional licensing for legal professionals is managed by the Courts' system. With few exceptions, professional licensure requires compulsory affiliation with local trade associations. Additional trade credentials are issued by various agencies. Teachers, farmers, fishermen, private

guards, insurance agents, financial advisors, home builders, tour guides, public transportation operators, taxi drivers, pesticide handlers and a wide array of additional occupations require government–issued credentials. Conditions, requirements and applications vary widely.

Professional occupations requiring compulsory membership in a local trade association Actors Nurse, general Agronomists Nurse, obstetrics Architects Nurse, practical Automotive technicians and mechanics Nurse, specialist Barbers Nutritionist, Dietist Certified Public Accountants Occupational therapist Chemists Occupational therapy assistant Dentist Optician, dispensing Draftspersons Optometrist Electricians Pharmacist Engineers Physicians and surgeons Health technologist Plumbers Interior designers Psychologist Land Surveyors Public events producers Landscape architects Refrigeration technicians Medical and health services manager Rehabilitation counsel Nurse, associated Social workers Veterinarian

Education infrastructure

According to the PREC, in academic year 2015, there were 665 certified K–12 private institutions with a total enrollment of 18,811 students in pre–school; 60,059 in elementary levels; and 65,164 in secondary levels, for a total enrollment of 144,034 students, down from 148,919 in 2014. For the same period, the PRDE reported having 410,950 students enrolled, down from 423,934 in 2014. The PRDE administered 1,377 K–12 schools in 2015, of which 589 are secondary schools. Due to demographic dynamics, the PRDE plans to further reduce the amount of schools to 1,227 in 2016, 134 less than 2014. The public education system has 31,214 teachers, while 11,645 teachers integrate the private system.

In the academic year 2015, 99 institutions were certified as providers of higher education (IHEs). Of these, 18 were public institutions that accounted for 26.0% of student enrollment; 49 were private non for–profit institutions with a share of 54.5% of total students enrolled; and 23 were for profit institutions with 19.5% of total students. The UPR is the largest public IHE, with 92% of the students enrolled in the public system distributed in 11 campuses. The largest private IHE, the Interamerican University, has 10 campuses and 32.2% of total students enrolled in private institutions.

Total student enrollment in the IHEs decreased 3.4% from and all time high in 2010 to its level of 240,878 students in 2015. In comparison, from 2010 to 2014, the total population in Puerto Rico decreased 4.67%. In terms of teachers, the public system had 5,337, expanding 2.5% since 2010, compared to 10,898 in private institutions, a reduction of 1.7% in relation to 2010.

In terms of career and technical education, in the academic year 2015, there were 2,328 instructional programs (of which close to half were concentrated in personal services and food preparation and serving careers) attended by 50,816 students, down from the all–time high of 79,013 in 2011, a drop of more than 35%; however, the amount of graduates for the same period went from 38,376 to 34,249, an 11% drop. In 2015, there were 8,222 teachers serving the system, up 3.35% from the 2011–2012 level. In addition to PRDOLHR and PRDE's public network of CTE's, the Commonwealth's Horse Racing Industry and Sport Administration administers a vocational school specialized in providing education to those interested in becoming jockeys, trainers, blacksmiths, stable boys, tamers, race horse medical technicians and exercise riders. It aims at providing education for the purpose of professionalizing the industry and to promote its growth in Puerto Rico and Latin America.

Industry–based credentials

Long–standing industrial sectors like manufacturing, construction, real estate, public administration, among others, have spur the availability and accessibility of industry–based credentials and certifications.

B. THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce development activities identified in (A) above.

Strengths

• While it posed immediate organizational challenges, the reorganization mandated by Act 171–2014, which transferred the Workforce Development Program from the PRDOLHR to the PRDEDC, will facilitate the integration of workforce and economic development activities required under WIOA. Significant opportunities arise by sharing the PRDEDC's resources available through the following units: Federal Contracting Center, One–Stop entrepreneur support network managed by the Commerce and Exports Corporation, Office of Industrial Tax Incentives, Youth Development Program, EB–5 Commonwealth's Regional Center, among other.

• Single Audit reports evidence a long record of compliance in managing workforce related programs, especially sizable programs with complex requirements including the core programs and required partners like TANF.

• As discussed in the previous section, although there are still voids in the system, the breadth and amount of programs provide many accessible opportunities for jobseekers and employers alike to find services, subsidies and support.

• Important strides have been made regarding long–standing problems that affected the public secondary education system, especially in measuring dropout rates and increased compliance with IDEA indicators. Also, the fact that the public education system is managed as an integrated statewide LEA works towards facilitating policy and program implementation, data integration and the measurement of outcomes.

• Almost every municipality is represented through local government consortia that have a wealth of knowledge and experience in partnering with private sector organizations to forward economic development. This infrastructure could be readily sourced to support the regional alignment required under WIOA, along with industry–based cluster organizations that possess the necessary expertise and networking to take full advantage of WIOA resources.

• Government downsizing has paved the way for a strong policy towards entrepreneurship development, which represents a significant space for private employment growth.

• The size of the population served and the impact of transfer payments on the economic conditions of those enrolled on sizable federal assistance programs (NAP, HUD, among other) that include a workforce component, represent an opportunity to increase education, training and work experience for a high number of individuals.

• The postsecondary education attainment for individuals ages 18 to 24, exceeded the national level in 2014.

• Core programs are supported by the availability of a large number of training and service providers and qualified personnel, especially to provide services to target populations, including persons with disabilities.

• Core and required programs have specific strengths that can be leveraged for enhancing the system. PRVRA's know–how in reaching ISY can be translated into and effective outreach strategy to be used by the Employment Service in exposing youth early–on to career information; Adult Education effectiveness in reaching and serving out–of–school youth (OSY) can be put to work for the purposes of increased service to OSY under Title I, as required by WIOA; among many other program best practices.

Weaknesses

• The Commonwealth has overtly relied on non–competitive formula funds, thus missing on opportunities to strengthen the workforce system. Notable omissions include the Apprenticeship Program, and competitive programs like REO, DEI, Ready to Work, Youthbuild and Job Plus Pilot.

• A decade of fine–tuning of programs to respond to fiscal challenges and the ensued government downsizing have somewhat impacted the completeness and effectiveness of the workforce governance structure. The accumulation of ad–hoc responses to particularized situations might have caused important voids or redundancies. For instance, the State Board for Career and Technical Education has been impaired since the reorganization of the PRDOLHR in 2011, whence the function was transferred to the PRDE. As for redundancies, two state departments manage CTE serving the same populations, one being the Perkins' grantee. These and other inconsistencies require analysis and resolution in order to enhance the system's effectiveness. Protocols for continued mapping of the workforce programs and services must be implemented in order to maintain and integrated visibility of the system.

• A silo–approach in managing government programs might have led to a diminish ability for leveraging program opportunities. More lateral redirecting among programs must be enabled through the appropriate structuring and maintenance of MOU's to strengthen coordination between core and required programs, local boards and operators in order to maximize resources and exchange referrals.

• The silo–approach might have also led to piecemeal communication and marketing of the services being offered throughout the workforce system to potential businesses customers and jobseekers alike, particularly when it comes to serving individuals facing barriers to employment.

• The experience of public–private partnering in promoting economic development has yet to be appropriated in the workforce development domain, especially to engage potential employers and their capacity enable work experiences for job seekers, especially among the youth and people with disabilities.

• Efforts to braid and mutually leverage funding streams must be strengthened, which involves enhancing the advisory function and the provision of accurate, prompt and complete data to policy and lawmakers alike.

• Information products are needed to assess specific aspects of the workforce system including: disaggregated data to ascertain services to individuals facing barriers to employment; real–time supply and demand dynamics in the labor market; or information to characterize underemployment, self–employment and the impact of the informal sector on the labor market. A data integration roadmap for the entire system is critical.

• Policies must be devised to tackle gender–skewed outcomes in post–secondary education and the labor market.

• The fiscal impairment of the public sector as a major employer and provider of funding for workforce activities poses a significant challenge to the effectiveness and performance of the entire system.

C. STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

Provide an analysis of the capacity of State entities to provide the workforce development activities identified in (A) above.

Please, refer to section II(a)(2)(A), above, for information regarding extent of services provided under each program.

B. STATE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the State's strategic vision and goals for developing its workforce and meeting employer needs in order to support economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. This must include—

1. VISION

Describe the State's strategic vision for its workforce development system.

Puerto Rico's workforce development system and its network of One–Stop Centers, succeed at being the service of choice to meet the needs of industries, businesses, employers and job seekers, and at expanding access to education, training and employment opportunities for adults, youth, dislocated workers, people with disabilities and individuals facing barriers to employment, thus contributing to further our economic development.

2. GOALS

Describe the goals for achieving this vision based on the above analysis of the State's economic conditions, workforce, and workforce development activities. This must include—

- Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing youth and individuals with barriers of employment* and other populations.**
- Goals for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers.

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* Individuals with barriers to employment include displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14); individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals.

** Veterans, unemployed workers, and youth and any other populations identified by the State.

1. Economic development goal

Support the growth of strategic economic development sectors with a labor force driven by technology and innovation.

2. Labor force development goal

Increase postsecondary educational attainment and access to training in alignment with the needs of the industry and job seekers to encourage participation in the labor force, especially among the youth and individuals with barriers to employment.

3. Labor market goal

Enable the expansion of private employment, especially for the youth, as a means to counter the fiscal constraints impinged on the public sector and its downsizing.

4. Public sector alignment goal

Spur the development of sector strategies and career pathways by targeting opportunities in the public sector to resource the convening of partnerships.

5. Private sector alignment goal

Engage private stakeholders in building and maintaining the workforce system, by means of facilitating a framework for planning, developing, and governing a job–driven system that fits the needs of the industry, jobseekers and individuals with barriers to employment.

6. Board alignment goal

Direct the State and local boards to concert the system into working across local workforce development areas by aligning programs, policies and services with the skills and industry demands of regional and economic development.

7. Statewide LMI integration goal

Update and expand the workforce and labor market information to achieve high–quality, timely, integrated data that informs policy, employer and jobseeker decision–making, and comparability with other jurisdictions.

8. Statewide resourcing goal

Maximize available funding and leverage non–traditional sources to support the improvement of the workforce system.

9. Integrated governance goal

Implement and sustain an effective, agile and non–redundant governance structure to brace the Commonwealth's workforce development system.

10. Integrated One Stop Centers' accessibility goal

Maintain the One–Stop Centers' system physically and programmatically accessible throughout, for both job seekers and employers to meet their occupational education and employment needs.

11. Integrated One Stop Centers' facilities goal

Plan the One–Stop Centers' facilities to enhance the experience of customers, ease of use and the operational integration of programs.

12. Integrated One Stop Centers' staff goal

Run the One Stop centers by a corps of aware, mission–driven and well–prepared staff.

13. Integrated One Stop Centers' information technology goal

Update information technology infrastructure in light of new requirements.

14. Integrated One Stop Centers' workflow goal

Update One Stop centers' workflow procedures to support integrated customer–centered operations.

15. Integrated One Stop Centers' monitoring goal

The workforce development system is driven by service delivery excellence and constant improvement.

3. PERFORMANCE GOALS

Using the table provided in Appendix 1, include the State's expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA. (This Strategic Planning element only applies to core programs.)

II.B.3. PERFORMANCE GOALS. PUERTO RICO DID NOT PROVIDE EXPECTED LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE RELATING TO THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS BASED ON PRIMARY INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE DESCRIBED IN WIOA SEC. 116(B)(2)(A) AND IL(B)(3) OF THE ICR. PUERTO RICO MUST REPLACE THE PROPOSED LEVEL FOR MEASURABLE SKILLS GAIN FOR TITLE I AND YOUTH MEDIAN EARNINGS FOR TITLE I WITH "BASELINE".

As required under 116(b)(3)(A)(iv)(I), the Commonwealth negotiated levels with the Secretary of Labor, regarding levels of performance for each indicator described in section 116(b)(2)(A)(iii), for each of the programs described in clause 116(b)(2)(A)(ii) and, for each of the first two (2) program years covered by the State Plan:

WIOA Title I Adults

• Employment - Second Quarter after Exit: Final Goals PY 2016, 35%; Final Goals PY 2017, 36%

• Employment - Fourth Quarter after Exit: Final Goals PY 2016, 34%; Final Goals PY 2017, 35%

• Median Earnings: Final Goals PY 2016, $2,400; Final Goals PY 2017, $2,500

• Credential Attainment Rate: Final Goals PY 2016, 64%; Final Goals PY 2017, 65%

• Measurable Skill Gains: Final Goals PY 2016, Baseline; Final Goals PY 2017, Baseline

• Effectiveness in Serving Employers: Final Goals PY 2016, Baseline; Final Goals PY 2017, Baseline

WIOA Title I Dislocated Workers

• Employment - Second Quarter after Exit: Final Goals PY 2016, 63%; Final Goals PY 2017, 64%

• Employment - Fourth Quarter after Exit: Final Goals PY 2016, 42%; Final Goals PY 2017, 43%

• Median Earnings: Final Goals PY 2016, $3,000; Final Goals PY 2017, $3,050

• Credential Attainment Rate: Final Goals PY 2016, 58%; Final Goals PY 2017, 59%

• Measurable Skill Gains: Final Goals PY 2016, Baseline; Final Goals PY 2017, Baseline

• Effectiveness in Serving Employers: Final Goals PY 2016, Baseline; Final Goals PY 2017, Baseline

WIOA Title I Youth

• Employment - Second Quarter after Exit: Final Goals PY 2016, 41%; Final Goals PY 2017, 42%

• Employment - Fourth Quarter after Exit: Final Goals PY 2016, 55%; Final Goals PY 2017, 56%

• Median Earnings: Final Goals PY 2016, Baseline; Final Goals PY 2017, Baseline

• Credential Attainment Rate: Final Goals PY 2016, 32%; Final Goals PY 2017, 33%

• Measurable Skill Gains: Final Goals PY 2016, Baseline; Final Goals PY 2017, Baseline

• Effectiveness in Serving Employers: Final Goals PY 2016, Baseline; Final Goals PY 2017, Baseline

WIOA Title III Labor Exchange <

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• Employment - Second Quarter after Exit: Final Goals PY 2016, 43.5%; Final Goals PY 2017, 45%

• Employment - Fourth Quarter after Exit: Final Goals PY 2016, 44.5%; Final Goals PY 2017, 46%

• Median Earnings: Final Goals PY 2016, $2,800; Final Goals PY 2017, $2,900

• Effectiveness in Serving Employers: Final Goals PY 2016, Baseline; Final Goals PY 2017, Baseline

WIOA Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation

• Employment - Second Quarter after Exit: Final Goals PY 2016, N/A; Final Goals PY 2017, Baseline

• Employment - Fourth Quarter after Exit: Final Goals PY 2016, N/A; Final Goals PY 2017, Baseline

• Median Earnings: Final Goals PY 2016, N/A; Final Goals PY 2017, Baseline

• Credential Attainment Rate: Final Goals PY 2016, N/A; Final Goals PY 2017, Baseline

• Measurable Skill Gains: Final Goals PY 2016, N/A; Final Goals PY 2017, Baseline

• Effectiveness in Serving Employers: Final Goals PY 2016, N/A; Final Goals PY 2017, To be defined

Please, refer to Appendix I, regarding expected levels of performance proposed for Title II program.

4. ASSESSMENT

Describe how the State will assess the overall effectiveness of the workforce development system in the State in relation to the strategic vision and goals stated above in sections (b)(1), (2), and (3) and how it will use the results of this assessment and other feedback to make continuous or quality improvements.

The effectiveness of the strategic framework will be assessed and tested according to procedures being mandated for each program and the system collectively. As prescribed under section 361.800 of the proposed rule One–Stop Centers and one–stop delivery systems will be certified for effectiveness, physical and programmatic accessibility, and continuous improvement, and as directed, these evaluations will take into account feedback from the One Stop network customers.

Performance reporting will comply with the requirements set forth in section 677.160 of the proposed rule including, as might be applicable to each core program:

• A state performance report on program levels achieved with respect to number of participants served

• Total number of participants who exited each of the core programs, including disaggregated counts of those who participated in and exited a core program by individuals with barriers to employment

• Demographics

• Total number of participants and program exiters who received career and training services for the most recent program year and the three preceding program years

• Levels achieved for the primary indicators for career and training services for the most recent program year and the 3 preceding program years

• Percentage of participants in a program who obtained unsubsidized employment related to the training received through Title I–B programs

• Amount of funds spent on each type of career and training service for the most recent program year and the 3 preceding program years

• Average cost per participant for those participants who received career and training services, respectively, during the most recent program year and the 3 preceding program years

• Percentage of a State’s annual allotment spent on administrative costs

• Any other information that facilitates comparisons of programs with programs in other States.

The State Board and core programs will enforce the incorporation of assessment protocols leading to improvement through the selection and certification processes of local boards, operators and providers. Measurement mechanisms will be devised to account for outcomes resulting from the implementation of sector strategies and career pathways.

C. STATE STRATEGY

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the State's strategies to achieve its strategic vision and goals. These strategies must take into account the State's economic, workforce, and workforce development, education and training activities and analysis provided in Section (a) above. Include discussion of specific strategies to address the needs of populations provided in Section (a).

1. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT, INCLUDING INDUSTRY OR SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS RELATED TO IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS AND CAREER PATHWAYS, AS REQUIRED BY WIOA SECTION 101(D)(3)(B), (D). "CAREER PATHWAY" IS DEFINED AT WIOA SECTION 3(7). "IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTOR OR OCCUPATION" IS DEFINED AT WIOA SECTION 3(23).

1. Economic Development Goal

Support the growth of strategic economic development sectors with a labor force driven by technology and innovation.

Economic Development Strategies

1. Under the lead of the PRDEDC, enhance the coordination between the State Board, the Commonwealth's (EB–5) Regional Center Corporation, FeCC (PTAC), the Office of Industrial Tax Exemption and the Youth and Workforce Development programs to foster employment opportunities, by promoting Labor Surplus Areas to increase HUBZones' support, affirmative employment by federal contractors, among other initiatives.

2. Actively advance layoff aversion measures and intervene in the process leading to planned closing or relocation of manufacturing plants, ensuring the system preserves employment across established industries.

2. Labor Force Development Goal

Increase postsecondary educational attainment and access to training in alignment with the needs of industry and jobseekers to encourage participation in the labor force, especially among the youth and individuals with barriers to employment.

Labor Force Development Strategies

1. Prioritize services and coordination across core and partner programs to expand education, work experience and employment outcomes for out–of–school youth.

2. Actively promote pre–employment transition services to youth with disabilities.

3. Expand early exposure of in–school youth to the range of career and higher education opportunities available through the workforce system.

4. Continue providing the College Board exam free of charge to all students enrolled in the public system taking it in 11th and 12th grades.

5. Improve coordination with residential setting comprehensive programs that combine education, job training and preparation, counseling, and supportive services to benefit disconnected youth.

6. Implement the Registered Apprenticeship program.

7. Coordinate with the PRDE's State Board for Career and Technical Education, the PRDOLHR and the industry, the effective delivery of occupational education for high–demand, highly skilled and/or technologically advanced occupations.

8. Address the need for employability skills training, especially in relation to preparing a good resume, searching for a job and understanding work expectations, as well as life skills including household management, financial literacy, balancing work and parenting responsibilities, and related competencies.

9. Improve the reach of the English language literacy activities throughout the population of jobseekers in need of English language skills.

3. Labor Market Goal

Enable the expansion of private employment, especially for the youth, as a means to counter the fiscal constraints impinged on the public sector and its downsizing.

Labor Market Strategies

1. Coordinate with the State agencies entrusted with certifying the concession of tax incentives under various State programs to facilitate resourcing their job creation mandates through the workforce development system's pool of qualified jobseekers, especially of younger workers and persons with disabilities accessing the labor force.

2. Improve the availability of labor market information on self–employment and promote entrepreneurship and the expansion of SMBs/SMEs among eligible adults, dislocated workers and youth, as an attainable, feasible, and rewarding alternative to employment.

4. Public Sector Alignment Goal

Spur the development of sector strategies and career pathways by targeting opportunities in the public sector to resource the convening of partnerships.

Public Sector Alignment Strategies

1. Enroll and ensure the continued support and participation of central government agencies in sector partnerships, especially to leverage discretionary sources to fund education, training, employment and supportive activities.

2. Embed language and requirements supporting sector strategies into relevant programs and initiatives, including regional and local plans, guidance to local areas, career pathways, apprenticeship programs, guidance for statewide incumbent worker training programs and customized training, among other activities.

3. Activate the participation of the vocational services program in the Employment Services' Employers Committee and other existing or new partnership coordinating bodies with the purpose of expanding the array of industries providing employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

4. Encourage the adoption by local governments of tax abatement measures and other benefits to reward businesses and employers sponsoring the implementation of regional sector strategies and career pathways through their use of the resources and services provided by the workforce system.

5. Provide training and capacity building to stakeholders focusing on the sector strategies implementation framework, effective industry analysis, employer engagement, partnership building, and design of career pathways and industry–relevant training programs, among other topics.

6. Leverage Title II funds allowability to advance the implementation of career pathways by aligning the industry needs with the education, training and supportive services needs of youths and adults.

7. Develop metrics and required evaluation tools, reports and dissemination mechanisms to track outcomes for regional sector strategies and career pathways.

5. Private and Academic Sector Alignment Goal

Engage private stakeholders in building and maintaining the workforce system, by means of facilitating a framework for planning, developing, and governing a job–driven system that fits the needs of the industry, jobseekers and individuals with barriers to employment.

Private and Academic Sector Alignment Strategies

1. Convene a working group integrated by representatives of key existing and emerging industries, leadership from public systems such as workforce, higher education, economic development and employment support services, and policymakers to assist the State Board in developing support for sector strategies and career pathways.

2. Leverage the PRDEDC's leadership to engage industry–based cluster organizations, and the leadership of elected officials to engage local government's consortia on economic initiatives, along with their resources and partner portfolios built around regional core competences, to support the State and local boards in weaving the activities of the workforce development system with those advancing regional economic development and strategic sectors.

3. Directly engage industry associations and individual companies with a large presence in Puerto Rico that might have an interest in investing in sector strategies to work directly with regional and local partnerships, including devising relevant data and labor market information products.

4. Identify opportunities to further academic research on conditions, approaches and prospects of the workforce development system.

6. State and Local Boards Alignment Goal

Direct the State and local boards to concert the system into working across local workforce development areas by aligning programs, policies and services with the skills and industry demands of regional and economic development.

State and Local Boards Alignment Strategies

1. Equip the State Board with the operational resources needed to carry out its convening functions under WIOA.

2. Adopt a common framework to advance the adoption of regional plans by the local boards, program leaders, and elected officials that optimizes program integration and supports the implementation of sector strategies and career pathways.

3. Adopt and adapt the methodologies advanced under TEN 17–15, Att. (11) and ETA's Sector Strategies Implementation Framework to accelerate the implementation of sector strategies and career pathways.

2. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL USE TO ALIGN THE CORE PROGRAMS, ANY COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN, REQUIRED AND OPTIONAL ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS, AND ANY OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THE STATE TO ACHIEVE FULLY INTEGRATED CUSTOMER SERVICES CONSISTENT WITH THE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS DESCRIBED ABOVE. ALSO DESCRIBE STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN REGARD TO WEAKNESSES IDENTIFIED IN SECTION II(A)(2).

1. Statewide Workforce and Labor Market Information Development Goal

Update and expand the workforce and labor market information to achieve high–quality, timely, integrated data that informs policy, employer and jobseeker decision–making, and comparability with other jurisdictions.

Statewide Workforce and Labor Market Information Development Strategies

1. Warrant jobseekers and workers the availability and accessibility of information and guidance required to make informed decisions about training and careers (including STEM), as well as access to the education, training and support services they need to compete in current and future labor markets.

2. Equip the State Board to execute the role of planning and coordinating the development of required information products by core, partner and other governmental entities, and the accessibility, reliability, dependability, scalability, interoperability and documentation of the workforce system's data collection and production, and to concert the system's Internet presence.

3. Maintain an active participation in the Wage Record Interchange Systems (WRIS and WRIS2) and collaborate with federal workforce data producers to ensure Puerto Rico is accounted for in their data products in order to facilitate planning processes under WIOA and national comparability.

4. Ensure seamless coordination between the State Board and PRDOLHR's Statistical Bureau to supply timely, reliable and accessible data to all the stakeholders of the workforce system.

5. Implement and standardize high–level reporting to policymakers on education and employment outcomes across workforce programs.

2. Statewide Resourcing Goal

Maximize available funding and leverage non–traditional sources to support the improvement of the workforce system.

Statewide Resourcing Strategies

1. Set criteria to direct statewide set–aside funding to support job–driven strategies.

2. Equip the State Board to manage the function of identifying and seeking additional or dormant competitive funding opportunities that can benefit any component of the workforce development system, and provide grantsmanship support to core and partner entities.

3. Advance the designation of the local boards as 501(c)(3) tax–exempted non–for profits to leverage non–traditional sources of grant funding.

3. Integrated Governance Goal

Implement and sustain an effective, agile and non–redundant governance structure to brace the Commonwealth's workforce development system.

Integrated Governance Strategies

1. Advance recommendations to review or modify state workforce programs outside the plan to eliminate redundancies, and align membership in State–designated committees, councils, boards and entities incidental to the workforce development system to closely reflect actual system dependencies and strengthen coordination.

2. Convene resources from core programs, TANF and other required programs to provide input to the State Board on One–Stop infrastructure integration issues including data collection, reporting, scheduling cross–program training for staff, and implementing communication protocols to promote working within a culture of integration that remains in place despite reorganizations and staff changes.

3. Further the universality of the system by requiring standing committees focused on serving youth, low skilled adults, individuals with disabilities and other relevant priorities to be maintained by each local area as part of the local board designation and certification processes.

4. Integrated One Stop Centers Accessibility Goal

Maintain the One–Stop Centers' system physically and programmatically accessible throughout, for both job seekers and employers to meet their occupational education and employment needs.

Integrated One Stop Centers Accessibility Strategies

1. Direct the State entities to acknowledge the One Stop Center network as the main option to access comprehensive workforce development services.

2. Deploy the agreement structure (MOUs) required to enable the integration of facilities and schedule of workforce activities to be delivered at the comprehensive centers and affiliated sites stressing the complementarity and completeness of services throughout the Island, including rural areas.

3. Designate a core–program working group to establish and coordinate a consistent, customer–centered, integrated, relevant and accessible presence in the Internet for the workforce development system, and to maximize, integrate and coordinate the utilization of social networking with a focus on reaching the youth and disseminating the system's benefits and successes.

4. Create a common workforce system identity, branding and messaging that lend support in marketing the system to those customers that ordinarily use the system, as well as to atypical customers like the highly–skilled job seeker, thus reinforcing the system's ability to attract a wider array of employers.

5. Built upon the guidance issued by USDOL–ODEP to develop local criteria and procedures governing the compliance throughout One Stop Centers with equal opportunity and accessibility requirements, both physically and programmatically.

6. Establish a dedicated business service to tend the specific needs of SMBs/SMEs and promote the use of One Stop facilities and/or staff to employers who might need it for prescreening, interviewing or other allowable activities.

5. Integrated One Stop Centers Facilities Goal

Plan the One–Stop Centers' facilities to enhance the experience of customers, ease of use and the operational integration of programs.

Integrated One Stop Centers Facilities Strategies

1. After initial integration, based on the accrued experience of users and staff, develop a brick and mortar approach to facilities' design along with criteria regarding the location of facilities in relation to amenities, and their accessibility, program–spatial relationships and environmental qualities, among other considerations.

6. Integrated One Stop Centers Staff Goal

Run the One Stop centers by a corps of aware, mission–driven and well–prepared staff.

Integrated One Stop Centers Staff Strategies

1. Reorganize One–Stop Centers' staff into functional teams based on the services they provide.

2. Develop and maintain a comprehensive cross–training schedule agreed–to by program partners encompassing the knowledge, skills, and motivation to increase staff capacity, expertise, and efficiency in managing the diversity of programs, to the degree required by the staff's specific role in the functional service flow implemented.

3. Train staff entrusted with data entry functions on the importance of data validation, data collection processes, and the importance of accurate reporting for the proper functioning of the entire system.

4. Develop and maintain an online knowledge database to exchange and disseminate cross–program expertise, interpretation, guidance and best practices throughout the system and across programs.

5. Make allowance to dedicate staff resources to serve the business customer who are capable of coordinating appropriate services for assisting employers, activities across one–stop center partner programs, and enhancing business awareness on sector strategies.

7. Integrated One Stop Centers Information Technology Goal

Update information technology infrastructure in light of new requirements.

Integrated One Stop Centers Information Technology Strategies

1. Compile processes for collection, storage, retrieval and sharing of data from the various programs in the workforce development system, and compose and maintain a roadmap guiding the implementation of solutions for the interoperability of case management, back–end data exchange, and changes in current program operations, including intake, co–enrollment, triage processing and performance reporting.

2. Fast–track data exchanges by advancing APIs to share key data and basic client information across programs in order to facilitate integrated registration, streamline delivery and avoid service duplication instances.

3. Stabilize the current case management applications (SIAC, CRIS, SIA) by extending their capacity to collect and report on performance indicators and produce quarterly and annual reports, across core programs, in compliance with proposed rule requirements.

8. Integrated One Stop Centers Workflow Goal

Update One Stop centers' workflow procedures to support integrated customer–centered operations.

Integrated One Stop Centers Workflow Strategies

1. Execute an agreement infrastructure (MOUs) to establish and clarify the roles and responsibilities of the various partners; establish a common "front–door" approach; progressively integrate registration across programs; ensure services are delivered by function, not program names, including the provision of supportive services; provide basic information about other programs at partner offices; ensure staff's knowledge and appropriate use of referrals; adopt uniform basic assessment processes across programs; use systematic triage process to assess participants' needs and appropriateness for services; and implement a common sequential flow through service units for customer enrollment, skills development, recruitment and placement.

2. Sustain an employer outreach/business service unit that presents a unified voice for the One–Stop Center network in its communications with employers.

3. Leverage the resources of the Puerto Rico Commerce and Exports Company to provide customized services to business customers.

9. Integrated One Stop Centers Monitoring Goal

The workforce development system is driven by service delivery excellence and constant improvement.

Integrated One Stop Centers Monitoring Strategies

1. Review current monitoring guidance, and annually thereafter, and communicate it throughout the system to ensure that the objectives of the public workforce investment system are met, including: onsite monitoring review; if program quality and outcomes meet the regulatory objectives; if providers are compliant with WIOA requirements; nondiscrimination and equal opportunity requirements; corrective action; and sanctions if corrective action is not taken.

Additional considerations in serving individuals with barriers to employment

In terms of service to individuals facing barriers to employment, counseling remains a key strategic activity across all core programs. Counselors has a specialized education coupled with years of experience and knowledge, and can provide information and guidance to clients on occupational requirements, employment opportunities, trends and other community resources that can benefit the job seekers.

As previously mentioned, seeking to activate the government entities' participation in key competitive programs aims to expand education, training and employment services to targeted populations. DEI, the qualification of local boards as Employment Networks under the Ticket to Work program, REO, Youthbuild, Job Plus, the expansion of activities for employment creation/retention under CDBG, are some of the targeted programs or activities.

Title II has a leading role in serving individuals with barriers to employment and ensuring their access to the labor force. To assist enhancing its service to these populations, the program will implement an Advisory Board to further fine–tuning and program improvements.

The Adult Education and Family Literacy program targets the population of disadvantaged adults through an outreach campaign that encompass agencies such as the PRDOH, the PRDOF, the PRDOLHR and private industries and corporations. Information is also disseminated through the Internet, media, flyers, presentations, and job placement and training activities. Low–income disadvantaged adults are also contacted through social service activities and their community schools. The information promotes the advantages of adult basic education as a means of attaining high school equivalency, better job opportunities and post secondary education and training.

The populations with the greatest need of adult education services are participants with a literacy level between 9th and 12th level (roughly two–thirds of participants), followed by those in levels between 4th and 6th grades (one–fifth of participants). Participants interested in vocational education are referred to PRDE's Career and Technical Education Program where basic and postsecondary vocational education is available. Participants interested in postsecondary education other than vocational education are referred to collaborating and other relevant postsecondary institutions.

Computer literacy is an option already available in the Adult Education and Family Literacy training activities and adult education instructors will continue to actively incorporate computer–assisted instruction into the curriculum as a strategy to develop digital literacy skills among students, which will enhance the participants' literacy development as well as their work skills.

Since there are on–going Adult Education and Family Literacy activities being offered in all of the municipalities where the One Stop Centers' network is located, the Program will collaborate with the network on a referral basis, and will be accessible as required by section 361.305(d)(1) of the proposed rule, including scheduling visits from program representatives to the One Stop Centers to provide information to interested participants.

The Adult Education and Family Literacy program currently coordinates with the PRDE's Special Education program to identify the participants' types of disabilities and provide a more adequate service to these adults through collaboration and technical assistance from Special Education's staff. The program provides reasonable accommodation through large–print tests, Braille and also specialized personnel that provide reading assistance for blind students, as well as flexible testing schedules for autistic adults. A structured menu of technical assistance activities and exchange of information materials and services to enhance services for this population are implemented

throughout the program stressing effective identification of students with disabilities, referral and technical assistance.

The program also actively identifies and integrates participants with mild disabilities into regular adult education classes. Other adults with sensory disabilities, including deaf, blind, deaf–blind are served through the Puerto Rico Opportunity Program, a non–profit private agency, which currently receives funds from the Adult Education and Family Literacy program through its sub–granting process. The program includes workplace methodologies and vocational training which in collaboration with industries and business will train adult students with disabilities to join the workforce.

New intra and inter agency program initiatives, have strengthened the collaboration efforts between the Adult Education and Family Literacy program and PRDE's Special Education program. Collaborative activities include cooperative teacher training sessions among adult education and special education teachers where learning styles, adult education strategies and innovative methods are offered as part of their professional development.

A total of 2,138 of incarcerated individuals were likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years and qualified for program services, of which 654 participated during 2015 school year. The participants were served through the Adult Education and Family Literacy program at both basic and secondary levels.

The PRDCR provides the program with updated lists of individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institutions within five years. The Adult Education and Family Literacy program designs curricula and shares it with the PRDCR staff and service providers in support of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals to facilitate their access to life–expanding career pathways opportunities, peer tutoring, and transition to re–entry services designed to facilitate post–release success and reduce recidivism. The Program encourages the PRDCR staff and service providers to include in their educational offer the integration of digital literacy skills and educational services leading to employment, economic self–sufficiency, family roles, and responsible citizenship in all education and literacy activities. All areas offered by the Adult Education and Literacy program, as well as job–training services are made available to the inmate population, including all basic education, secondary education and English literacy courses. Teachers serving this population participate in professional development activities addressing innovative strategies, best practices, integration of digital literacy skills into all adult educational and literacy activities, and effective strategies for working with adults with disabilities.

Regarding single parents and displaced homemakers, the Adult Education and Family Literacy program will strongly promote among its providers, the services necessary to enable single parents with small children to attend classes, and will encourage providers to pursue agreements with agencies providing supportive services to participants, including appropriate follow–up and tracking. This might include childcare, transportation, counseling services or other assistance needed and allowable.

The PRDE maintains several adult education activities in public housing developments that serve single parents with small children and displaced homemakers through adult basic education and referral to social services and career and educational counseling. Service providers are strongly encouraged during the orientation process to provide support services that will motivate displaced homemakers to attend adult education services.

Partnership efforts with core programs will promote referral for job and vocational training. Additional services will be coordinated with public housing authorities to replicate successful programs in other locations. The Adult Education and Family Literacy program is currently exploring innovative methods of instruction to more effectively reach these participants and ensure their continued participation in the program.

The adult immigrant population served through the Adult Education and Family Literacy program consists of mostly Dominican descent. The Program served approximately 733 persons in school year 2015. Since the main language of instruction is Spanish, immigrants are incorporated into the regular program. Specific attention is devoted to IEL/Civics Instruction, since many of the participants are bound to apply for citizenship once attaining high school diploma. The program focuses on assisting participants improving English, math proficiency and understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, with the objective of expanding their access to education and training opportunities, as well as to employment.

The number of homeless participants in the Adult Education and Family Literacy program fluctuates, as this is a transient population. The focus of the program, regarding this population, is to promote self–esteem, social service counseling, life skills and development of practical tasks that can promote basic employment and retention. The PRDE's Office of Adult Education currently considers providing incentives to service providers that can effectively target and serve this population.

The PRVRA provides a wide range of services to people with disabilities in order to prepare and integrate them in the workforce including: training, personal/vocational adjustments, pre–employment services, supported employment services for consumers with significant disabilities, counseling, and job readiness services (resumes, interviews, identification of candidates ready for use and referred to deals employment), among others. The PRVRA also sponsors trainings in various accredited educational institutions for the purpose of aiding customers to acquire the knowledge and occupational skills required to access the labor market. Please, refer to section VI.VR(l), below, for additional information on State goals and priorities in carrying out the Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment programs.

The Council on Developmental Disabilities targets employment opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the community of their choice. A planned strategic activity of the program is to train at least 50 employers to promote equal employment opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

To further expand employment opportunities, the plan proposes to employ at least 30 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities through self–employment, cooperatives and other forms of employment that meet the expectations the population. The program set out to emphasize activities resulting in jobs for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their integration to their communities.

III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an Operational Planning Elements section that support the State's strategy and the system-wide vision described in Section II.(c) above. Unless otherwise noted, all Operational Planning Elements apply to Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs. This section must include—

A. STATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include—

1. STATE BOARD FUNCTIONS

Describe how the State board will implement its functions under section 101(d) of WIOA (i.e. provide a description of Board operational structures and decision making processes to ensure such functions are carried out).

The State Board was locally enabled under Act 171–2014 and OE–2014–064 to promote comprehensive planning and coordination of employment and training programs in the State. The PRDEDC has been directed to provide support to the board through the its Workforce Development Program, which also administers Title I of WIOA and the TAA. The Board has planning and coordination responsibilities related to the federal support received through WIOA and other programs with workforce development efforts.

The development of the plan is a task that the State Board accomplishes with the collaboration of and interagency committee integrated by core and required partners and a year round working agenda. The role and responsibilities of the State Board are defined by WIOA, local statute and its internal regulations. The latter establishes subcommittees and working groups in connection with technical and particular issues. Among these: Strategic Planning and Budget Committee; Private Sector Liaising Committee; Evaluation, Monitoring and Auditing Committee; Entrepreneurship Committee; Continued Improvement Committee; and the Executive Committee.

The State Board is also responsible for assisting the Governor with additional functions designated by WIOA. These include:

• Developing and implementing the State Unified Plan and performance measures

• Developing/expanding strategies for partnership in in–demand sector/occupations

• Developing and aligning policies

• Developing and continuously improving the one stop delivery system

• Developing policies and guidance on one stop partner role and resource contribution

The plan stresses the need to equip the Board to perform additional tasks imposed under WIOA, other strategic functions for coordination the information and systems integration, and pursuing funds to assist in the development of the workforce system, among other tasks.

Pursuant to section 101(e)(1) of WIOA and 4(D) of TEGL 27–14 the State Board was certified as an Alternative Entity. The following breakdown details the proposed actions or strategies as they relate to the State Board's functions under WIOA.

Implementation of State Board functions under WIOA: Related implementation strategy or activity

1. 101(d)(1) the development, implementation, and modification of the State plan:

i. The State Board maintains a Strategic Planning Committee, supported by the WPD's Planning Division. Guidance will be advanced to steer the planning processes at the regional and local levels.

2. 101(d)(2) ...the review of statewide policies, of statewide programs, and of recommendations on actions that should be taken by the State to align workforce development programs in the State in a manner that supports a comprehensive and streamlined workforce development system in the State...:

i. Please, refer to section II(c)(2). Strategy section proposes advancing recommendations to review and modify state workforce programs outside the plan to eliminate redundancies, and align membership in State–designated entities. All core programs will support this activity. Strategy section proposed to utilize the service mapping tools provided by USDOL to aid in these efforts.

3. 101(d)(2) ...including the review and provision of comments on the State plans, if any, for programs and activities of one–stop partners that are not core programs:

i. Please, see information corresponding to 101(d)(1), above.

4. 101(d)(3)(A) the identification of barriers and means for removing barriers to better coordinate, align, and avoid duplication among the programs and activities carried out through the system:

i. Please, see information corresponding to 101(d)(2), above.

5. 101(d)(3)(B) the development of strategies to support the use of career pathways for the purpose of providing individuals, including low–skilled adults, youth, and individuals with barriers to employment (including individuals with disabilities), with workforce investment activities, education, and supportive services to enter or retain employment:

i. Please, refer to section II(c)(1). Goal 4 foresees to spur the development of sector strategies and career pathways by targeting opportunities in the public sector to resource the convening of partnerships. Strategy section aims to convene a working group to assist the State Board in developing support for sector strategies and career pathways. As mentioned above, Strategy section, addresses the utilization of proven methodologies provided by USDOL to aid in these efforts. PRDE's programs (Title II and Carl D. Perkins supported CTE) will lead the way in pursuing the implementation of career pathways and providing the necessary insight to the State Board. The WDP and PRVRA will also support the effort by pursuing DEI funding.

ii. The State Board maintains a Committee in charge of liaising with the private sector that will also provide support in this effort, along with PRDEDC's resources for coordinating industry clusters. Guidance to be adopted by the State Board regarding the local and regional planning processes will further align the support for career pathways and sector strategies at these levels.

6. 101(d)(3)(C) the development of strategies for providing effective outreach to and improved access for individuals and employers who could benefit from services provided through the workforce development system:

i. Strategy section emphasizes convening resources from core programs, TANF and other required programs to provide input to the State Board on One–Stop infrastructure integration issues including implementing communication protocols. The working group referenced under strategy section will work towards integrating the identity, branding and messaging of the system to reach a wider array of customers.

7. 101(d)(3)(E) the identification of regions, including planning regions, for the purposes of section 106(a), and the designation of local areas under section 106, after consultation with local boards and chief elected officials:

i. Please, refer to section VI.I–B(a)(1)(A) and (B), below.

8. 101(d)(3)(F) the development and continuous improvement of the one–stop delivery system in local areas, including providing assistance to local boards, one–stop operators, one–stop partners, and providers with planning and delivering services, including training services and supportive services, to support effective delivery of services to workers, jobseekers, and employers; and:

i. Please, refer to section VI.I–B(a)(2)(B). The State Board maintains a Legislation Committee and a Strategic Planning Committee that will be instrumental in advancing the necessary guidance to steer the planning processes at local and regional levels and turn these into an effective tool to achieve the objectives of WIOA and workforce and economic development. The State Board's Monitoring Committee will have the support of WDP's Monitoring team in ensuring the system's continuous improvement, including compliance with performance measures. Goal 15 sets the monitoring aims of the system. Compliance with section 675.255 of the proposed rule will be mandated throughout the system including that pertaining to: primary indicators of performance for the core programs for WIOA title I under §677.155(a)(1) and (d) that apply to the State; Governor's additional indicators of performance to local areas in the State; and performance reports guidance to be issued by USDOL and USDOE. As required, the State Board will provide electronic access to the public local area performance report in its annual State performance report.

9. 101(d)(3)(G) the development of strategies to support staff training and awareness across programs supported under the workforce development system:

i. The working group referenced under strategy section will advise the State Board on the system's integration issues, including the need to provide cross–training and a culture and integration (Goal 12).

10. 101(d)(4) the development and updating of comprehensive State performance accountability measures, including State adjusted levels of performance, to assess the effectiveness of the core programs in the State as required under section 116(b):

i. With the implementation of goals (please, see section II(c)(2)), the State Board twill be equipped to execute the role of planning and coordinating the development of required information products by core, partner and other governmental entities. This will entail pursuing compliance with the Workforce Data Quality Campaign (WDQC), thus promoting a comprehensive cross–agency data and performance measurement system that covers all major workforce development programs, not just the four titles of WIOA.

11. 101(d)(5) the identification and dissemination of information on best practices:

i. Under proposed strategy a knowledge database to exchange and disseminate cross–program expertise, interpretation, guidance and best practices throughout the system and across programs, is proposed to be develop and maintain by core and required programs.

12. 101(d)(6) the development and review of statewide policies affecting the coordinated provision of services through the State's one–stop delivery system described in section 121(e):

i. A core–program working group will be designated (see Strategy section) to convene resources from core and required programs to provide input to the State Board on One–Stop infrastructure integration issues. Pursuant to section 678.705 of the proposed rule, guidelines will be issued to determine core program contributions to the sustainment of the system as well as guidance to assist Local Boards, chief elected officials, and One–Stop partners in local areas in determining equitable and stable methods of funding the costs of infrastructure at One–Stop Centers.

13. 101(d)(7) the development of strategies for technological improvements to facilitate access to, and improve the quality of, services and activities provided through the one–stop delivery system:

i. Under proposed strategy a core program working group to establish and coordinate a consistent, customer–centered, integrated, relevant and accessible presence in the Internet for the workforce development system, and to maximize, integrate and coordinate the utilization of social networking with a focus on reaching the youth and disseminating the system's benefits and successes, and to ensure such technology is accessible to individuals with disabilities and individuals residing in remote areas.

14. 101(d)(8) the development of strategies for aligning technology and data systems across one–stop partner programs to enhance service delivery and improve efficiencies in reporting on performance accountability measures (including the design and implementation of common intake, data collection, case management information, and performance accountability measurement and reporting processes and the incorporation of local input into such design and implementation, to improve coordination of services across one–stop partner programs):

i. Please, refer to section III(b)(1)(A)

15. 101(d)(9) the development of allocation formulas for the distribution of funds for employment and training activities for adults, and youth workforce investment activities, to local areas as permitted under sections 128(b)(3) and 133(b)(3):

i. Please, refer to section III(b)(5).

16. 101(d)(10) the preparation of the annual reports described in paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 116(d):

i. Please, refer to section III(b)(1)(B).

17. 101(d)(11) the development of the statewide workforce and labor market information system described in section 15(e) of the Wagner–Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 49l–2(e)):

i. Please, refer to Goal 7 and section III(b)(1)(A), below.

18. 101(d)(12) the development of such other policies as may promote statewide objectives for, and enhance the performance of, the workforce development system in the State:

i. The State Board maintains committees on Entrepreneurship and Small Business that will be leveraged to pursue the goal of enabling the expansion of private employment, especially for the youth, as a means to counter the fiscal constraints impinged on the public sector and its downsizing.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGY

Describe how the lead State agency with responsibility for the administration of each core program or a Combined Plan partner program included in this plan will implement the State's Strategies identified in Section II(c). above. This must include a description of—

A. CORE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE STATE'S STRATEGY

Describe the activities the entities carrying out the respective core programs will fund to implement the State's strategies. Also describe how such activities will be aligned across the core programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan and among the entities administering the programs, including using co-enrollment and other strategies.

All core programs will make extensive use of required and allowable activities to further the State's strategies for developing an integrated, job–driven and customer–centered system. Key activities are highlighted in the following section, as they relate to the goals and strategies enunciated in section II(c), above.

Key activities by core program and other components to carry out the State's strategies are described in the next section according to Section II(c) Reference Number:

(Note. "On–going" refers to a continued, on–going effort; "ST", refers to a short–term implementation period (completed within the first 6 months of the plan); "MT", to a mid–term implementation period (completed within the first 2 years of the plan); and "LT", to a long–term implementation period (completed no earlier than 3rd year of the plan)

A. II(c) Ref–Wagner Peyser Act – 1.1–EO 11246's affirmative employment coordination. On–going. 2.8–Extend services through external providers. ST. 3.1–Coordinate registry in Employment Service with entities. ST. 3.2–Identify or develop data products through the LMI service. MT. 4.3–Advance coordination. ST. 5.3–Coordinate with the Employer's Committee. ST. 5.4–As allowed under 49l–2. As rqd. 6.2–Support local area planning as rqd. under 108(b)(2). ST. 7.1–Maintain and publicize the LMI. On–going. Cross–train employment service staff on partner programs. ST. 7.3–Coordinate with national data producers. On–going. 9.1–Recommend actions impacting programs. ST. 9.2–Integrate working group. ST. 10.2–Convene services to be scheduled by the core program. ST. 10.3–Integrate working group. ST. 10.4–Implement marketing strategy. MT. 10.6–Maintain dedicated staff. On–going. 11.1–Advance specification MT. 12.1–See III(a)(2)(C), below. 12.2–Integrate working group. ST. 12.4–Update content. On–going. 13.1–Document systems. ST. 13.2–Deploy APIs. MT. 14.1–Execute MOU. Deploy integrated customer service model. ST. 14.2–Establish protocols for business outreach staff team–up. ST. 15.1–Update procedures. ST

B. II(c) Ref–WIOA Title I

1.1–Market to outlier PRDEDC programs. On–going. 1.2–Deploy Rapid Response Office. ST. 2.1–Coordination with PRRADP to plan for dropout risk factors. ST 2.3–Provide on–site school group orientation. ST. 2.5–Coordinate transition services with PRDOF's Foster Care program. ST. 2.8–Enforce needs assessments for local area funding allocation. ST. 3.1–Review assessment – screening protocols to enhance QOS to incoming employers. ST. 3.2–Survey local area business opportunities. MT. 4.1–Pursue participation in USDOL's DEI program. LT. 5.4–As allowed under 107(d)(2), 127(b)(2), 134(a)(3)(A). As rqd. 7.1–Review protocols and materials to expand info on partner programs. ST. Cross–train employment service staff on partner programs. ST. 8.1–Advance

incumbent worker and OJT guidance. ST. 9.1–Recommend actions impacting programs. ST. 9.2–Integrate working group. ST. 10.2–Convene services to be scheduled by the core program. ST. 10.3–Integrate working group. ST. 10.4–Implement marketing strategy. MT. 10.5–Recommend procedures. ST. 10.6–Maintain dedicated staff. Assist on proposals. On–going. 11.1–Advance specification MT. 12.1–See III(a)(2)(C), below. 12.2–Integrate working group. ST. 12.4–Update content. On–going. 12.5–Maintain dedicated staff. On–going. 13.1–Document systems. ST. 13.2–Deploy APIs. MT. 13.3–Complete modifications ST. 14.1–Execute MOU. Deploy integrated customer service model. ST. 14.2–Establish protocols for business outreach staff team–up. ST. 14.3–MOU for services under 134d(1)(A)(ii) II(c) Ref–WIOA Title II 2.1–Use the longitudinal system to improve OSY visibility. ST. Deploy career pathways. MT. 2.4–Follow–up on inclusion of Title II participants. ST. 2.8–Continue integration in program curricula. On–going. 2.9–Conduct needs assessment at statewide level to guide providers' service. ST. 4.5–Contract services; develop replicable methods for use across programs. MT. 4.6–Include in services contracted. MT. 5.4–As allowed under 223(a)(1)(C). As rqd. 6.2–Support local area planning as rqd. under 108(b)(2). ST.7.1–Cross–train employment service staff on partner programs. ST. 9.1–Recommend actions impacting programs. ST. 9.2–Integrate working group. ST. 10.2–Convene services to be scheduled by the core program. ST. 10.3–Integrate working group. ST. 10.4–Implement marketing strategy. MT. 11.1–Advance specification MT. 12.2–Integrate working group. ST. 12.4–Update content. On–going. 13.1–Document systems. ST. 13.2–Deploy APIs. MT. 13.3–Complete modification ST. 14.1–Execute MOU. ST. Expand integration. MT. 15.1–Update procedures. ST.

C. II(c) Ref–WIOA Title II 2.1–Use the longitudinal system to improve OSY visibility. ST. Deploy career pathways. MT. 2.4–Follow–up on inclusion of Title II participants. ST. 2.8–Continue integration in program curricula. On–going. 2.9–Conduct needs assessment at statewide level to guide providers' service. ST. 4.5–Contract services; develop replicable methods for use across programs. MT. 4.6–Include in services contracted. MT. 5.4–As allowed under 223(a)(1)(C). As rqd. 6.2–Support local area planning as rqd. under 108(b)(2). ST.7.1–Cross–train employment service staff on partner programs. ST. 9.1–Recommend actions impacting programs. ST. 9.2–Integrate working group. ST. 10.2–Convene services to be scheduled by the core program. ST. 10.3–Integrate working group. ST. 10.4–Implement marketing strategy. MT. 11.1–Advance specification MT. 12.2–Integrate working group. ST. 12.4–Update content. On–going. 13.1–Document systems. ST. 13.2–Deploy APIs. MT. 13.3–Complete modification ST. 14.1–Execute MOU. ST. Expand integration. MT.

D. II(c) Ref–Rehabilitation Act 1.1–EO 11246's affirmative employment coordination. On–going. 2.1–Review MOUs with Special Education, expand to Title II and others to improve id. eligible OSY. ST. 2.2–Continue school–based activity under 113(d)(3). On–going. Stress Title I referral of non–eligible students transitioning. ST. 2.3–Continue on–site school group orientation. ST. 2.5–Continue MOU with Job Corps. Seek to expand to other programs. ST. 2.8–Continue providing through personalized services. On–going. 3.1–Provide criteria to enhance opportunities for program participants. ST. 3.2–Continue capacity building and support activities for self–employed participants. On–going. 4.1–Collaborate as a partner in DEI. LT. 4.3–Collaborate as a partner in DEI program. ST. 5.4–Maintain agreement with UPR and support the SRC and the SCIL research initiatives. On–going. 6.2–Support local area planning as rqd. under 108(b)(2). ST. 7.1–Cross–train employment service staff on partner programs. ST. 9.1–Recommend actions impacting programs. ST. 9.2–Integrate working group. ST. 10.2–Convene services to be scheduled by the core program. ST. 10.3–Integrate working group. ST. 10.4–Implement marketing strategy. MT. 10.5–Recommend procedures. ST. 11.1–Advance specification MT. 12.2–Integrate working group. ST. 12.4–Update content. On–going. 13.1–Document systems. ST. 13.2–Deploy APIs. MT. 13.3–Complete modifications. ST. 14.1–Execute MOU. ST. Expand integration. 14.2–Establish protocols for business outreach staff team–up. ST. 15.1–Update procedures. ST.

E. II(c) Ref–State Board 1.1–As allowed under 101(d)(3)(D). On–going. 2.1–Issue guidance enforcing OSY share of spending. ST. 2.7–Lead interagency coordination. Develop sector and career pathways strategies. MT. 3.2–Issue relevant guidance applicable to local plans, to encourage SBA program engagement. ST. 4.2–Issue relevant guidance applicable to local plans. ST. 4.3–Incorporate in sector strategies–related guidance. ST. 4.4–Issue relevant guidance applicable to local plans. ST. 4.6–Issue relevant guidance applicable to local plans. ST. 4.7–Issue relevant guidance. ST. 5.2–Issue relevant guidance applicable to local plans. ST. 5.3–Issue relevant guidance applicable to local plans. ST. 6.1–Staffing, outsourcing. ST. 6.2–Issue relevant guidance. ST. 6.3–Issue relevant guidance. ST. 7.2–Staffing, outsourcing. ST. 7.4–Prioritize resolution of LMI needs and data availability issues. On–going. 7.5–Built upon reporting rqd. under 171–2014. 8.1–Issue relevant guidance. ST. 8.2–Staffing, outsourcing. ST. 8.3–Coordinate and require designation from local boards as part of planning process. ST. 9.1–Recommend actions impacting core, rqd. and outlier programs. MT. 9.3–Issue relevant guidance. ST. 10.2–Issue guidance on local area agreements with core and required partners. ST. 10.4–Partner with academia to develop marketing strategy. ST. 10.5–Issue relevant guidance. ST. 11.1–Develop approach. Embed in operator selection guidance. MT. 12.2–Issue relevant guidance to include operators. ST. 12.3–Include requirement in relevant guidance, extend to operators. ST. 12.4–Implement platform. ST. 13.1–Complete roadmap. MT. 13.2–Coordinate specification. ST. 14.1–Issue relevant guidance for local boards. ST. 15.1–Issue relevant guidance for local boards. ST

B. ALIGNMENT WITH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE PLAN

Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be aligned with programs and activities provided by required one-stop partners and other optional one-stop partners and activities provided under employment, training (including Registered Apprenticeships), education (including career and technical education), human services and other programs not covered by the plan, as appropriate, assuring coordination of, and avoiding duplication among these activities.

Required Partner Programs

The workforce system will strive in providing effective access to programs and services, within the meaning of the proposed rule, having either "program staff physically present at the location; having partner program staff physically present at the one–stop appropriately trained to provide information to customers about the programs, services, and activities available through partner programs; or providing direct linkage (which entails providing direct connection at the One–Stop, within a reasonable time, by phone or through a real–time Web–based communication to a program staff member who can provide program information or services to the customer; and excludes providing a phone number or computer Web site that can be used at an individual’s home; providing information, pamphlets, or materials; or making arrangements for the customer to receive services at a later time or on a different day) through technology to program staff who can provide meaningful information or services".

Programs authorized under title I of WIOA, including Job Corps

As with all required partners, the local areas will coordinate with Job Corps Program for delivery of its service through the development of a MOUs entered into between the Local Boards, the Chief Elected Officials and Jobs Corps, considering the services that local areas will deliver through the One Stop Centers to Job Corps participants, how infrastructure costs will be shared, methods of referral of individuals among programs and contractual terms of the MOU and the process to amend it.

Programs authorized under title I of WIOA, including Youthbuild

The jurisdiction has yet to apply for USDOL Youthbuild funding. The State Board will encourage the participation and pursuit of competitive funding by the PRDOH and the local boards.

Programs authorized under title I of WIOA, including Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Program

Please, refer to section VI.W–P(e), below.

Activities authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.)

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is funded under Title V of the Older Americans Act Amendments of 2006, Public Law 109–365. The purposes of the SCSEP are to foster individual economic self–sufficiency and promote useful opportunities in community service activities, which include community service employment for unemployed low–income persons who are age 55 or older, particularly persons who have poor employment prospects, and to increase the number of persons who may enjoy the benefits of unsubsidized employment in both the public and private sectors. Currently, Puerto Rico has three grantees (AARP, Experience Works and the PRDOLHR), including the state grant; serving 617 participants throughout the Island. The state grant for PY 2012, currently administered by the PRDOLHR, has 125 authorized positions thereby serving 20 percent of the total participants of the SCSEP in Puerto Rico.

Since the state grant program was transferred to the PRDOLHR in 2010, the agency has gone to great lengths to provide participants and host agencies with a smooth change and no disruption of services. In order to improve the program, the PRDOLHR completed a participants' profile in order to identify training needs and help them transition from their community service assignment to unsubsidized employment.

Once transitioned, SCSEP staff conducted interviews with all host agencies representatives and participants, through which found that participants and host agencies were in need of information and clarification regarding the program operations and goals. To help correct the gaps the program developed the following: a SCSEP Operations Manual, a Host Agency Manual, a Participant's Manual and a Data Validation Handbook.

All documents were completed in Spanish to ensure full comprehension by program staff, host agencies representatives and program participants. The PRDOLHR also performed training sessions for host agencies and orientation sessions for participants, to guarantee full understating of SCSEP functions and goals; along with their roles and responsibilities under the program. Taken together, these were important steps toward improving the services and outcomes of the SCSEP in Puerto Rico.

The SCSEP program also signed MOUs with the local boards to facilitate the coordination of activities with local One–Stop Career Centers. The Director of the SCSEP state program will continue to represent the SCSEP in state level One–Stop partners' meetings and initiatives. This group of program administrators will ensure effective collaboration among seemingly disparate programs and constituencies. Each partner learns of the others programs and goals and makes every effort to ensure regional and local operations are informed of such.

At the local level, SCSEP will continue to remain an active partner in the One–Stop Centers. Coordination of services for participants at locals One–Stop Career Centers will include occupational

skills evaluations, labor market information, job search strategies, intensives services/training needed by specific participants, and other resources valuable to the SCSEP. The program will assist One–Stops by providing presentations to clients on various topics to enhance their chances of obtaining and retaining employment. Other collaborative efforts will promote joint training activities and job fairs, share job leads and joint efforts to engage the business community in initiatives that identify qualified older workers meeting the employer needs.

The skills assessment and job search assistance tools and techniques for this population need to take into account that many older workers might have a combination of several factors that might hinder their searches such as; single employer experience, outdated job search techniques, financial pressures and lack of formal education, all factors that need to be incorporated into training and accommodation processes.

As administrators of the Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Unemployment Insurance and Compensation Program, Employment Services Program, and Veterans Program, the PRDOLHR continues to integrate the SCSEP to the services provided by these other programs, including core programs and the One–Stop network. Through internal collaborative agreements, eligible participants of the SCSEP will benefit of more intensive level of job search assistance with referrals to the Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) program, funded by the USDOL to provide more intensive reemployment services. In coordination with the PRDOLHR Veterans program, participants of the SCSEP that qualify as veterans will receive available services.

Since the island currently lacks a statewide–integrated public transportation service capable of reaching the entire territory, the program cannot implement an Island–wide public–transit initiative. Instead, the SCSEP has agreements to provide free transportation services to participants with no means of transportation or with limited mobility. Host agencies and municipal governments provide participants with door–to–door transportation at no additional cost to the program or the participant. The program will continue to participate in local coordinated transportation plans with municipal governments, or statewide initiatives like that seeking to implement the Complete Streets Act of 2010, to ensure that local transportation initiatives consider the needs of older workers and older citizens in general.

The SCSEP provides priority of service to those most in need, as required by 20 CFR 641.520, which includes individuals with disabilities and veterans. Currently, no veterans are enrolled and only one participant with disabilities is registered in the program, despite continued outreach efforts made in coordination with the PRDOF and the PRVRA. Further analysis of the low number of applicants with disabilities, revealed that most veterans and eligible disabled individuals receive benefits related to their disability and their perception is that their benefits will be lost or reduced with participation. The SCSEP in coordination with public and private agencies and organizations will continue to conduct strong outreach efforts to identify eligible participants among veterans and people with disabilities.

The SCSEP served as liaison with civic organizations for the delivery of services and assistance to people with disabilities, including veterans. Last year, in coordination with the Puerto Rico Rotary Club the program delivered wheelchairs to older low–income citizens. The program will also contribute with efforts to improve access to mainstream programs and services to reduce financial vulnerability to homelessness among veterans. The SCSEP Director serves on the Board of the Veteran’s Ombudsman Office.

The SCSEP will continue to support strategies that engage participants in community education and non–formal learning communities' activities that offer skill training that compliments established community–service training positions. The program staff will gather information of such activities through host agencies, local community based organizations and the municipal governments. Community based education providers include senior citizens, libraries, faith–based organizations and others. Future efforts need to be directed at broadening the opportunities for training and higher learning at regional State university campuses as well as technical colleges and other higher learning institutions.

The SCSEP recognizes the importance of engaging participants with local community and faith–based organizations. These organizations provided suitable and valuable community service training positions and eventual employment opportunities to participants: 81 percent of current host agencies are community and faith–based organizations that provide a variety of community services, including elderly and child care services. The SCSEP will also continue to coordinate activities with community entities such as local chambers of commerce, the developmental disability board, as well as other programs that provide services to older persons. Through partnering and coordination with community and faith–based organizations the SCSEP will continue to connect participants with supportive services.

The Office of the Advocate of the Retired and Older Persons is the State–designated agency on Aging. The SCSEP entered into an MOU with the Office to target females 62 years and older and males 65 years and older, which are short of 13 credits or less to qualify for Social Security retirement benefits. The MOU allows the programs to prioritize job search efforts for these populations.

Seeking to further coordinate with activities being carried out under other titles of the Older Americans Act, the program aims to partner with other titles of the OAA and the municipal governments to enable opportunities for cross referrals of eligible SCSEP participants, identify employment opportunities and designate additional host agencies. The SCSEP partners with Title III of the OAA to support nutrition, in–home care, transportation, and disease prevention and health promotion, along with caregiver support programs and services.

To maintain employer relationship and assist participants in retaining their positions after job placement, the SCSEP will ensure follow–up retention and counseling after placement into unsubsidized employment activities. Group and individual job search and job retention counseling are a built–in feature of the service delivery model used by program staff and host agencies have been integrated into these efforts. The program will continue offering training to host agency members that provide direct supervision to SCSEP participants, ensuring the integration of job search and retention strategies as part of the community service assignment.

Currently, participants of the SCSEP might appear to have adequate access to services since located in MSAs. However, most participants reside in non–urbanized areas, and thus lack direct access to hospitals, public offices and services. Despite this fundamental difference, the SCSEP will continue to use the US Census to determine participants' place of residence. The USDOL should be aware that this could impact compliance with 20 CFR 641.365, since it affects the determination of over–served and underserved locations. SCSEP will stay vigilant in compliance with equitable distribution of its SCSEP positions.

In those municipalities in which the USDOL has determined, using the most recent census data, that the eligible population has changed locations or for other reasons currently the program shows

over–enrollments, a gradual shift of participants into unsubsidized employment must be aggressively pursued. This will facilitate making authorized positions available for areas in which there has been an increase of the eligible population thus is considered as underserved locations.

Career and technical education programs at the postsecondary level authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)

The Puerto Rico State Board of Career and Technical Education is the entity responsible for the implementation of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. The PRDE is the state agency responsible for administering the program and oversees CTE in the public school system at both secondary and postsecondary levels. There are 155 schools that operate CTE programs, 35 of which are public high schools offering solely or primarily CTE courses, with an enrollment of 32,448 students. It also comprises a postsecondary technical institute with four campuses with close to 3,000 students enrolled, in addition to one institution that serves the corrections' system.

Consistent with the conditions set forth in an MOU, information regarding postsecondary course offerings and activities are available to individuals at all One–Stop career centers and the Department collaborates with local boards throughout Puerto Rico to help ensure a comprehensive workforce preparation system. A PRDE representative from the regional level sits on every local board and acts as the PRDE one–stop coordinator.

The program coordinates with other programs managed by the PRDE, including Title II and the IDEA. The strategies that have been designed to attain effective coordination and avoid duplicity of services include the following:

• The CTE institutions and the Technological Institute's campuses are included in the list of One–Stop training providers, and coordinate their services and offerings with the local areas in order to meet the specific needs of job seekers and employers ensuring access to vocational and technical education.

• Programs are coordinated with Title II in order to integrate basic education into occupational education. This will benefit OSY who have not completed high school diploma requirements and wish to participate in an occupational training.

• The availability of sources of financial assistance, especially PELL Grants, will be coordinated with the One–Stop Centers for those participants who qualify and wish to continue postsecondary studies.

• MOU and interagency alliances will be established, as required, to offer similar or complementary services to benefit the qualifying clientele and the rest of the Puerto Rican populations.

• MOUs will be updated and maintained, including a formalized collaboration with the PRDOLHR to promote the establishment of clear and specific guidelines necessary for effective coordination of CTE and other services.

The PRDE uses the skills established in SCANS to continuously develop a curriculum attuned to the needs of the job market. The emphasis on planning revolves around the occupational opportunities forecasted by the PRDOLHR; nevertheless, the PRDE takes into consideration regional characteristics. The occupational demand drives the focus of PRDE's CTE goals and guidance. Directives include the following:

• Courses shall only be offered for training, upgrading, and retraining in recognized occupations and/or emerging occupations to meet the labor demand.

• Every CTE course or program offered by a school district must be reviewed every two years to ensure that each course or program meets a documented labor demand.

• The governing board of any high school district or unified district, prior to establishing a CTE program for adults, must conduct a job market study of the labor market area in which it proposes to establish the program.

• Every provider shall receive input from the School–Business Advisory Council.

Since school year 2008, all CTE programs assisted with Perkins funds have been aligned with the PRDE's curriculum standards and framework. Students apply academic content and skill in order to accomplish CTE goals in the classroom and in the workplace, and are made aware of the academic standards being addressed. Real–world applications for academic content standards have been developed for academic classes that partner with CTE programs, and academic and CTE knowledge and skills are integrated through project and problem based learning, service learning, integrated courses, CTE courses that meet university requirements, team teaching, and other similar approaches.

Under WIOA, the program seeks to support the system through partnerships with industry, updating of curriculum, development of career pathways to address workforce needs, articulation agreements with post–secondary education programs, recruitment and training of qualified CTE teachers, teacher externships, and ongoing professional development opportunities.

The PRDE will continue furthering cooperative agreements with the Technological Institute and other public and private postsecondary institutions, with the purpose of offering students the opportunity to complete college degrees by means of a sequential curriculum and avert any duplicity of courses. Also, the PRDE will continue offering the dual credit program in the secondary level through which the participating students complete an associate degree in the Technological Institute of Puerto Rico through a sequential curriculum, in addition to completing the high school diploma requirements.

Puerto Rico will strive to guarantee that its students will be able to transfer applicable credits for admissions and degree requirements. Since the program of study covers secondary and postsecondary levels, PRDE has identified the appropriate alignment of related industry recognized credentials and certifications. If the student earns a credential at the secondary level, that credential will be recognized at the postsecondary level through the articulation agreement.

The PRDE will continue promoting the participation of students in study and work experience in their respective areas of technical competency, in order to increase the number of students completing a postsecondary degree while working in an area related to their major field of studies. Pell Grant, child–care, and other benefits will be offered to students who qualify and pledge to initiate and complete postsecondary studies towards a college degree or certification.

The PRDE's CTE system is aligned with the national model of career clusters and pathways. Currently, sixty–nine programs of study are approved and might be adopted by eligible participants. The programs of study exist within the framework of ten career clusters and twenty–five pathways. At least one program of study is supported in each school. In all, 155 schools are approved in different pathways. CTE courses are offered at a total of 155 educational institutions within Puerto

Rico. This group of 155 schools is made up of Career and Technical High Schools (13), High Schools with Career and Technical Departments (8), High Schools with Career and Technical Offerings (110), Career and Technical Area Schools (4), Specialized Career Schools (6), Special Education Schools Centers (6), Technical Institute Campuses (4), and other career schools (4).

All new CTE programs of study developed and approved must identify the state credential/certification available upon completion at the secondary level, if any, and the additional education or apprenticeship opportunities after high school as well as the industry credentials available upon completion of those levels. The State Department and the Health Department (in case of health–related careers) oversee credentialing, certification, and licensure requirements. The following courses are regulated by the Board of Examiners: Architectural Drafting; Plumbing; Electricity; Industrial Refrigeration; Refrigeration and Air Conditioning; Barbering and Hair Stylist; Industrial Electronics; Marine Motors Mechanics; Automotive Collision Repair; Auto Mechanics; Heavy Machinery Mechanics; Automotive Technology; Practical Nursing; Emergency Technician; Dental Assistant; Associate Degree in Health Sciences – Nursing; Associate Degree in Health Sciences – Pharmacy Assistant; and Surgical Technology.

Programs are closely monitored by the PREC and are expected to meet rigid quality and educational requirements. The PRDE looks forward to develop a unit for technical assessments. The emerging industry–based technical skill assessment will be designed to identify crossover between industry practical needs and PRDE programmatic goals to determine the skills and knowledge upon which the test for each program area will be grounded. All CTE courses and programs will develop or adopt a technical skill assessments based on industry standards as determined from alignment with the CTE model curriculum standards and framework or statewide industry advisory determination. The resulting assessments will be instituted island–wide.

Through the One–Stop Centers the program will expand its outreach capabilities. Program information and resources will be made available aiming to help increase the awareness and understanding of programs of study among students, parents, counselors, faculty, administration, and business and industry. Trainings and workshops will be continually offered to help disseminate up–to–date Perkins information, including CTE program of study offerings.

The program ensures equal access and actively promotes programs for nontraditional training and employment. The program provides the necessary support services, including transportation, child–care and the appropriate equipment for disabled persons and other participants who qualify. The curriculum is adapted as needed to ensure the full participation of all the members of special populations, the program works collaboratively with other agencies serving special populations, and the PRDE continually assesses and monitors the program to ensure equal access and participation in CTE to the members of special populations.

Coordination is also maintained with several special projects managed by the PRODE dedicated to supporting the development of its students in special populations including Title II, Assistance for Pregnant Teens, Bilingual Citizen Project, Special Education, and Work Study Program. Alternate schedules are also available to students through the Centers for CTE Services. The Centers for CTE Services allow students to participate in CTE programs during the afternoon and participate in academic offerings during the evenings and during the weekends.

Other strategies for ensuring access to CTE programs for special population students include:

• Outreach and recruitment information regarding career opportunities with an emphasis on nontraditional opportunities

• Identification of special population students

• Utilization of assessment tools and individualized education plans for special population students enrolled in vocational and technical programs to determine their special needs;

• Planning and coordination of supplemental services for special population students enrolled in vocational and technical education programs;

• Identification of appropriate adaptive equipment, assistive devices and new technology for students with disabilities; and

• Identification and development of special instructional materials or adapting existing instructional materials for vocational and technical programs.

The PRDE provides alternative education programs for students who are at least 16 years old who have left high school and want to return to high school with a more flexible schedule to satisfy both their academic and occupational requirements for graduation with a high school diploma and occupational certificate.

In addition, short–term and nontraditional offerings will be enhanced for the purpose of increasing occupational retraining alternatives, in accordance with the needs and interests of special populations and the demands of the workforce. Referrals of eligible cases will be made for interactive services and programs offered by the PRVRA and PRDE's Special Education. These services include the following aspects: Orientation and Counseling; Physical and mental rehabilitation; Vocational training; Transportation; Allowance; Interpreters for the hearing impaired; Readers for the blind; Personal assistant services; Occupational equipment; Job Placement; and Follow–Up.

The PRDE operates five special education schools (grades 7–9) for at–risk students. These are non–Perkins prevocational schools that are fully equipped with sophisticated technology and provide occupational skills training and prepare students to enter a regular vocational or academic high school. Special support services are provided to address the educational and psychological issues faced by students.

Another alternative educational program is the Validation of Occupational Experiences, which works with individuals who have a middle school diploma (9th grade) and occupational experiences in a specific area but do not have a formal certificate/credential. The program trains these individuals so that they obtain a certificate in certain regulated industries. Once the individual has the certificate, he/she is eligible to request the examination administered by the State Examining and Licensure Board for the corresponding occupational area.

A close coordination will be established with the Boards that regulate the different occupations, for the purpose of establishing differentiated requirements for students of special populations, such as offenders, special education students and participants in nontraditional courses, when applicable.

Special procedures or mechanisms will be implemented to achieve job placement for persons released from correctional institutions and for the disabled. The PRDE will continue to promote

dialogue and joint planning activities with representatives from the correctional institutions, the liaising resources, and representatives from CTE, in order to:

• Promote the development of the annual needs assessment of the inmate population who demonstrate interest in vocational and technical courses, for the purpose of determining the programmatic offerings that will prevail during each school year.

• Promote the identification of adult and juvenile offenders who will receive occupational and technical training for employment or self–employment, taking into account the remaining years of imprisonment before their release.

• Promote the implementation of administrative procedures in the different correctional institutions, in order to provide the required attention to the technical training phase of each student in the event he/she is transferred from one center to another.

• Determine the nature of the necessary technical assistance.

• Design an annual programmatic and fiscal monitoring program.

• Determine the necessary procedures for the job placement and follow–up of graduates.

• Determine the necessary procedures for updating, identifying and using the existing equipment acquired with Perkins funds.

• Determine the necessary procedures for updating, identifying and using the existing equipment acquired with Perkins funds.

• Identify support services for the qualifying correctional population.

Activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.)

The main goal of the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program is to assist workers who have lost or may lose their jobs as a result of foreign trade. The TAA program offers a variety of benefits and services to eligible workers, including job training, income support, job search and relocation allowances, a tax credit to help pay the costs of health insurance, and a wage subsidy to workers 50 years of age and older. This program seeks to provide skills, credentials, resources and support to displaced workers, to encourage them to an early return to the labor force. During PY 2014, the TAA program delivered services to 200 eligible workers in five certified companies.

TAA Delivery of Service, PY 2014: Activities, Participants, Investment ($) (Source: WDP, PY 2014 Report)

? Institutional/vocational training, 46, $55,361 ? On the job training, 11, 0 ? Case management, 214, $338,289 ? Job search allowance, 823, $508,847 ? Waivers , 20, ? TRA, 17, ? R/TAA–A/TAA, 5, $8,579 ? Working/placed, 64

The TAA program is integrated in the provision of services of the State Rapid Response Office and One–Stop Centers. The State Rapid Response Office delivers the first services industries in need and determines if the industry qualifies to be certified under the TAA program. If eligible, the Office

helps the industry filing a petition to the USDOL. In case of certification, the Office will notify the workers available benefits and services. This process takes about 30 or 40 labor days. During this period, displaced workers can obtain services from the One–Stop Centers.

Co–enrollment in Title I ensure overcoming the barriers to an expedient service. Most workers meet dislocated worker eligibility criteria and so shall enter the one–stop delivery system immediately following the announcement of a layoff. Early skills assessment improves TAA participation rates and allows individuals more time to consider options, even before these workers may become eligible for TAA. Once TAA eligibility has been established when the USDOL certifies a petition for TAA, and workers have been informed that they are covered by a certification, One–Stop Centers staff will continue to serve co–enrolled TAA–certified workers, as part of the dislocated worker service delivery system to avoid duplication of services. Braided funding will also be leveraged to support OJT for co–enrolled workers.

The Rapid Response Office and the TAA services will be effectively integrated to the One–Stop Centers and use the network as the main point of participant intake and delivery of TAA program benefits and services. To this effect, MOUs will be readily implemented with local boards and operators ensuring only State government personnel will perform TAA–funded functions undertaken to carry out the TAA program.

Please, refer to section VI.I–B(a)(2)(D) for additional information.

Activities authorized under chapter 41 of title 38, United States Code

Puerto Rico Department of Labor, through the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG), is committed to serving transitioning service members, veterans, and their families by providing resources to assist and prepare them to obtain meaningful careers and maximize their employment opportunities. JVSG commitment is an important part of fulfilling our national obligation to the men and women who have served our country.

While continuing to serve existing veterans and other non–veteran job seekers, we recognized that changes in workforce programs' service delivery strategies to veterans were needed to respond to the forecasted increase in veterans, including men and women transitioning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, to the civilian labor force. Additionally, we are working with workforce partners to ensure changes are effected so workforce programs are aligned with the roles and functions established in their authorizing legislation.

Disable Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP)

The JVSG staff was refocused on their statutory duties to ensure that eligible veterans and eligible spouses receive the best combination of services, according to their needs. To accomplish this refocusing, Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists serve only those veterans and eligible spouses most in need of intensive services. As a result, DVOP specialists will serve a narrower group of veterans and eligible spouses, enabling the specialists to provide intensive services to a vast majority of the people they serve. This, in turn, will impact the core programs, including WP and Title I.

Under 38 U.S.C. 4103A(a), a DVOP specialist provides intensive services and facilitates placements to meet the employment needs of veterans, prioritizing service to special disabled veterans, other disabled veterans, and other categories of veterans in accordance with priorities determined by the

USDOL. Policies and procedure are in place to specifically prohibit DVOP specialists from performing non–veteran related duties that detract from their ability to perform their statutorily defined duties related to meeting the employment needs of eligible veterans. Additionally, regular audits are performed by the DVET to ensure compliance with the limitations on the duties of DVOP specialists.

DVOP specialists also place maximum emphasis on assisting veterans who are economically or educationally disadvantaged. To ensure that DVOP specialists are able to fulfill their statutory responsibilities to provide intensive services to these categories of veterans, they are required to follow guidance developed by USDOL to identify the veterans prioritized and emphasized by the DVOP statute. An eligible veteran or eligible spouse who is identified as having a significant barriers to employment is immediately referred to a DVOP specialist or, in instances where a DVOP specialist is not available, another provider of intensive services.

Also, as directed by the USDOL, veterans aged 18 to 24 years are referred to a DVOP specialist for services. Veterans also receive reemployment services under a FY 2016 Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program. RESEA provides focused case management services, including reemployment orientation, individualized career assessment, and job search assistance.

Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER)

LVERs perform only the duties outlined in 38 U.S.C. 4104(b), which are related to outreach to the employer community and facilitation within the state's employment service delivery system. LVERs have assigned duties to promote to employers, employer associations, and business groups the advantages of hiring veterans. LVERs, where implemented, are part of the One–Stop Centers "business services team" or like entity, and as such serves as an active member of that team. Also, LVERs advocate for all veterans served by the network with business, industry, and other community–based organizations by participating in appropriate activities such as:

• Planning and engaging in job and career fairs

• Conducting employer outreach

• In conjunction with employers, conducting job searches and workshops, and establishing job search groups

• Coordinating with unions, apprenticeship programs and businesses or business organizations to promote and secure employment and training programs for veterans

• Informing Federal contractors of the process to recruit qualified veterans

• Promoting credentialing and licensing opportunities for veterans

• Coordinating and participating with other business outreach efforts

LVERs are also responsible for "facilitating employment, training, and placement services furnished to veterans under the applicable State employment service delivery systems" (38 U.S.C. 4104(b)(2)). This facilitation duty is defined as the act of capacity building within the state's employment service delivery system to ensure easier access to the appropriate employment and training services for job

seeking veterans. LVERs plays an important role in assisting with the development of the service delivery strategies for veterans in their assigned One–Stop Centers, as well as educating all One–Stop Centers partner staff with current employment initiatives and programs for veterans.

Gold Card Initiative

The Gold Card provides unemployed post–9/11 era veterans with the intensive and follow–up services they need to succeed in today's job market. The Gold Card initiative is a joint effort of the DOLETA and the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS). ETA and VETS have developed a series of enhanced intensive services, including follow–up services, to identify those barriers to employment faced by veterans of post 9/11 era. The services, when provided under the Priority of Services to Veterans, are designed to overcome those barriers and to reinsert our 9/11 era veterans the labor workforce.

Due to the high unemployment rate faced by our veteran population, "Gold Card" services are available to veterans to help them obtain the necessary help to reinsert them in the labor market as soon as possible. An eligible veteran can present the Gold Card at his/her local One–Stop Career Center to receive enhanced intensive services including up to six months of follow–up. Information about the "Gold Card" initiative might be found at http://www.dol.gov/vets/goldcard.html. On this web site veterans might have the opportunity to print their "Gold Card" certificate and obtain information about how to access the available services.

The enhanced in–person services available for Gold Card holders at local One–Stop Career Centers may include:

• Job readiness assessment, including interviews and testing

• Development of an Individual Development Plan (IDP)

• Career guidance through group or individual counseling that helps veterans in making training and career decisions

• Provision of labor market, occupational, and skills transferability information that inform educational, training, and occupational decisions

• Referral to job banks, job portals, and job openings

• Referral to employers and registered apprenticeship sponsors

• Referral to training by WIA–funded or third party service providers

• Monthly follow–up by an assigned case manager for up to six months

Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.)

Through appropriate guidance, local boards and operators will be encouraged to seek CSBG funds passing through the PRDOF or partner with current sub–grantees to expand their offer of training, capacity building and supportive services at the local level.

Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development

Cross training will be provided to One–Stop Center staff on HUD programs. Through planning guidance, local boards and CEO's will be encouraged to actively participate in the planning process of State and entitled municipalities mandated under the CDBG to schedule activities aimed at providing assistance to profit–motivated businesses to carry out economic development and job creation/retention activities to benefit low– and moderate–income persons. Planned activities at the State and entitled municipalities levels have consistently been concentrated around the provision of infrastructure.

The State Board will also encourage local boards and the PRDOH to seek participation in Youthbuild, Job Plus and other initiatives aimed at expanding opportunities for self–sufficiency for the more than 50,000 households currently served by the public housing system and the homeless populations.

Programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws (in accordance with applicable Federal law)

The PRDOLHR's UI programs include the following: regular UI, UCX, UCFE, TRA and PAB.

The main purpose of the Unemployment Insurance is to pay benefits to claimants and help them to return to the labor market before they exhaust their UI benefits. The Bureau of Employment Security, UI Division, will support WIOA through the RESEA personnel and by assigning one UI merit staff member to address any unemployment claimant's issue.

The PRDOLHR is committed to improve reemployment service delivery strategies. These strategies are contained in the new RESEA program and the core program activities to be implemented in the State Unified Plan. RESEA staff will be ascribed to the program as a team for the provision of reemployment services to UI claimants selected to participate in the RESEA program. A UI merit staff member will be available to work on program management. The role of this UI staff member is to serve as a point of contact for technical assistance regarding UI issues, policies and procedures.

The approach will ensure claimants served through the RESEA program at the One–Stop Centers to meet the eligibility provisions of State laws and receive an appropriate level of service suited to each individual claimant and be exposed to reemployment services (RES) including guidance, evaluation, Individual Reemployment Plan, labor market Information focused on claimants needs, referrals to job search self–directed, additional services (job search workshops, assistance in finding employment, occupational counseling and referrals to other services) and eligibility review to continue receiving unemployment benefits (UI).

RESEA staff will provide the traditional RESEA activities such as the UI eligibility review and referrals to adjudication. Responsibilities include registering UI claimants in Wagner–Peyser as required by State law, referral of UI claimants to career counselors as deem necessary, case management, one on one personal interview with the UI claimant, job search workshops, orientation of services available through the One–Stop Centers, referral to job offers, UI eligibility review and providing UI claimants with labor market information. These services will be managed by the Reemployment Service staff and as appropriate, by a licensed career counselor, where available (not all offices have a career counselor on–site).

As part of this commitment, the PRDOLHR will monitor closely these strategies to assure its successful implementation to help UI claimants in RESEA to return to the labor market before they exhaust their UI benefits. Through the RESEA initiative, ES will make efforts to implement strategies to achieve improved UI connectivity with the public workforce system and improved reemployment service delivery strategies. PRDOLHR is committed in continuing making progress connecting UI claimants to job opportunities and/or services that will speed their return to employment.

Programs authorized under section 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. 17532)

The statute authorizes the USDOL to grant funds to non for profit organizations to provide job training and job placement services to eligible offenders, including work readiness activities, job referrals, basic skills remediation, educational services, occupational skills training, on–the–job training, work experience, and post–placement support, in coordination with the one–stop partners and one–stop operators, businesses, and educational institutions.

Puerto Rico has yet to participate and compete for funding made available by the USDOL under the provisions of section 212. By equipping the State Board with the resources to help the system in pursuing competitive funding, in coordination with the PRDCR and local boards acting as non for profit organizations, the workforce system will be prepared to rein in any available opportunity to serve this population.

Programs authorized under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.), subject to subparagraph (C).

Coordination with TANF will be strengthen to identify and pursue braided funding opportunities to support common services and to transition to procedures that facilitate serving customers under both TANF and the core programs. In the short–term, cross–program knowledge and understanding of the TANF and core programs will be delivered to staff members and a formalized referral process will be implemented to deliver career counseling and training coordination services and to provide access to job development and placement services for TANF customers.

One–Stop Centers network bring to TANF customers enhanced capabilities in job search resources, use of labor market information to guide employment and training decisions and an increased level of individualized career counseling services, while TANF provides the means to succeed in serving low–income individuals thus facilitating local boards to meet the requirements of section 129(a)(3)(A)(ii) and the Planning Guidelines issued by the State Board. Many integration opportunities remain when considering the type and extent of services provided under TANF, core and other required partner programs; nevertheless, performance measurement continues to pose challenges since TANF performance measurement is bound to work participation rates. Other challenges present stem from administrative structures and the interoperability of data systems.

TANF is administered by the PRDOF's Administration for the Socioeconomic Development of Families. Its benefits are provided to families composed of one or two parents (one disabled) or specified relatives with children under the age of 18 who are in their care or age 18 and expected to graduate a secondary school by age 19. The child is eligible provided he/she satisfies the Commonwealth's compulsory school attendance requirements.

An initial assessment is performed to determine skills, prior work experience and employability of individuals above 18 years of age, or under 18 years if it is a parent who has not completed high school or is not attending school. On the basis of the assessment, the case manager, jointly with the

participant, will establish an Individual Responsibility Plan, as it is required by the PRWORA. This plan includes the participant and agency responsibilities, employment goals, and work activities and services needed to achieve the goal. Also, will describe any supportive services needed including transportation, lunch expenses, childcare, uniform, books, tools or training materials.

The Commonwealth requires recipients to engage in work without delay unless exempted. Congress never extended to the Commonwealth the option of including on case–by–case basis families in which a non–recipient parent receives SSI, when the Aid to the Aged, Blind and Disabled (AABD) Programs in the states were converted to SSI. Accordingly, the Commonwealth considers the SSI and AABD Programs as the same in the context of the TANF Program.

The participant is required to register and seek employment through the PRDOLHR's Employment Service. Also, it is referred to engage in work activities, as directed in the Puerto Rico's Work Verification Plan. Most TANF recipients must comply with at least 30 hours a week of work participation. To verify countable hours, the participant must submit the time sheet to the case manager, which must be signed by his work activity supervisor.

Core training and work experience activities under TANF include the following:

• Job Search and Job Readiness Assistance. All new participants are enrolled on job readiness assistance. This activity consists of 4 consecutive weeks where the recipients participate in activities for 30 hours a week. Designated staff provides assistance on decision–making, self–esteem, attitudes toward employment, budgeting, time management, job search, interview skills, job readiness assessment, classes, workshops, one–on–one training on resume writing, setting up a business, among other skills. The staff also meets with the participants to discuss their goals and coach them during their job search.

• Community Service Programs. Community service is a training activity that is temporary and transitional, and provides participants with job skills that can lead to employment while also meeting a community need. This activity is designed for those participants that need to increase their employability, as they do not have an educational background, occupational skills and/or work experience. Participation in this activity means joining a structured program in which TANF recipients perform work for the direct benefit of the community under the auspices of public or nonprofit organizations. This activity should not exceed 12 months. In case the participant needs to stay in the activity to improve his/her skills, the case manager must document the participant's needs and obtain a supervisory approval to extend his/her participation for up to 6 additional months. The participants may be placed in fields such as health, social services, environmental protection, education, urban and rural redevelopment, welfare, public facilities, and childcare, recreation and public safety.

• Providing Child Care Services. This is a structured program were childcare services are provided by a participant to enable another TANF recipient to participate in an approved community service activity. The participant who provides the service must be certified as a provider for childcare services as established by the PRDOF.

• Vocational Educational Training. Vocational Educational Training is a structured educational program that is directly related to the preparation of participants for employment in current or emerging occupations. This training provides the individual with the knowledge and the occupational skills to become employed. This activity will not exceed 12 months and must be offered by accredited institutions. This activity might include training towards a baccalaureate or advanced

degree but will not exceed the 12–month period. This activity will only be allowed during the last year of studies.

• Unsubsidized Employment. Paid full–time employment in the private or public sector that is not subsidized by TANF or any other public funds. This activity includes self–employment and participants might become employed by their efforts or guided by the Administration's designated staff.

• Subsidized Private and/or Public Sector Employment. Paid employment for which an employer receives a subsidy from TANF funds to offset the cost of the wages and any additional costs used to serve TANF participants. TANF designated staff will use marketing skills to encourage employers to make employment opportunities available to these participants. This activity must not exceed 52 weeks and the participant is required to be working for a minimum of 30 hours per week. The program reimburses the wages paid to the employer, supportive services (childcare, transportation and food) and any other expenses required for work activities or job placement that will be evaluated case by case.

• Work Experience. The purpose of work experience is to improve the employability of those who cannot find unsubsidized full–time employment. Placements are made in the private or public sectors and are designed to prepare participants to obtain unsubsidized full–time employment by helping them develop a current work history, establish employment references and develop and improve marketable skills. The participant will be working while receiving TANF benefits. The case manager evaluates the participant's work abilities to place him/her accordingly and will evaluate the participant's performance monthly thereafter. Participation in this activity should not exceed 12 months, except for a warranted extension for up to 6 additional months. The work–site provider signs an agreement that includes the participant's schedule, provides daily supervision to the participant and keeps in contact with the case manager to discuss the participant's progress. Work experience placements occur at any bona fide business including business, industry, government or nongovernmental agency setting.

• On–the–Job Training (OJT). OJT is paid employment at a work site by a public or private employer in which the employer provides training and skills essentials to perform productive work. This training is provided by the employer and must be documented in a formal training plan that is evaluated and approved by the Administration and included in a contractual agreement. Also, the employer must agree to keep the participant working as a regular employee after the training. The length of this activity will be based on the participant's skills and the employer's needs, but will not exceed more than 3 months. The participant must comply with the 30 hours a week required by the program.

Non–core training and work experience activities under TANF include the following:

• Job Skills Training Directly Related to Employment. Consists of trainings or education for job skills, required by an employer to obtain employment or to advance or adapt to the changing demand of the workplace. This activity may also include training to promote basic skills such as computer and workplace literacy, work values, occupational and transferable skills and personal career portfolio development.

• Education Directly Related to Employment. This activity is aimed for adults who have not received a high school diploma or GED, and provides education to acquire knowledge or skills in relation to a specific job or job offer. It consists of adult basic education or GED preparation and testing.

• Satisfactory Attendance at Secondary School. This activity is aimed for those participants who have not obtained a high school diploma. For minor parents it will consist of regular attendance at a secondary school or in a course leading to a GED, over the 20 hours of core activities. Adults may participate in a course leading to a GED, for a maximum of 10 hours weekly, as a non–core activity.

On–going coordination between TANF and core or required programs encompass the following activities:

• Employment Services. TANF participants are required to register with the PRDOLHR's Employment Service. Participants receive assessment and testing; counseling; job search workshops; labor exchange; job referral and job placement among other services.

• Title I. TANF participants are referred to receive allowable employment and training services.

• Title II. TANF participants are referred to receive bridge or remedial education and prepare for GED testing.

• PRVRA. Participants with disabilities are referred to obtain allowable services, including training, counseling and employment.

• PRDE. TANF participants are referred to obtain vocational education.

The program also coordinates program or supportive services with other entities, including those offered by the Youth Development Program at PRDEDC; the provision of health care services, including mental health services with the Department of Health and prevention programs administered by the Commonwealth's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; PRDOH's help in finding subsidize housing; services to victims of or at–risk of domestic violence, such as counseling, referrals and hot–line services, and shelter alternatives to victims offered by the Women's Advocate Office; childcare and developmental services for pre–school children of TANF participants engaged in activities approved by the program, offered through service providers; and referral of participants to enroll in the PRCEC's and the Economic Development Bank to benefit from programs targeting self–employment and entrepreneurship, among other.

Additional Partner Programs

The state Board will encourage expanding services and extending the collaboration of local boards and operators with federal programs other than required partners and with State–sponsored workforce development programs, prior approval of the boards and the CEOs. As directed under the proposed rule, the collaboration should reflect the appropriate mix of services based on local or regional labor market information and population demographics.

Employment and training programs administered by the Social Security Administration, including the Ticket to Work and Self–Sufficiency Program established under section 1148 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1320b–19)

Through the issuance of local planning and certification guidance, the State Board will encourage local boards and operators to become engaged in the Ticket to Work program as qualified Employment Networks. Puerto Rico's serviced by 66 employment networks; nevertheless, just one (Caguas Guayama) out of the 15 local workforce areas is currently qualified as an Employment Network.

The PRVRA continues receiving referrals from the Ticket to Work Program for the purpose of providing vocational rehabilitation services. In addition, the PRVRA established an agreement with the Caribbean Center of Work Incentives Planning Assistance (CWIPA) to provide benefits planning service to the consumers of the PRVRA who are beneficiaries of the Social Security Disability Insurance. This service is expected to help these beneficiaries in decision–making regarding the benefits of reintegrating into the labor market.

As required under WIOA, PRVRA will coordinate its services with the Employment Networks for common customers, including individuals receiving assistance from an Employment Network under the Ticket to Work program, detailing how the responsibility for service delivery will be divided between the network and the agency.

Employment and training programs carried out by the Small Business Administration (SBA)

Coordination with the local district office of the SBA will be enhanced to fully tap into the opportunities available under the program for entrepreneurial capacity building and development. As previously discussed, although self–employment in Puerto Rico accounts for roughly twice the national average, entrepreneurship development still lags significantly when compared to other jurisdictions, thus representing a key opportunity for private employment creation.

Through planning guidance, local boards will be encouraged to engage the SBA and its network of Small Business Technology and Development Centers (SBTDCs) with locations in 6 local areas, and its specialized centers for international trade, technology and innovation, and the program initiatives servicing students, women, veterans and national guard reserve personnel, young and emerging entrepreneurs, older persons, and homemakers. The local boards shall also be encouraged to leverage the small business regional clustering organization initiative serving the entire Island led by the SBA.

Under the lead of the PRDEDC, the Federal Contracting Center will approach the SBA program to devise ways to effectively market the HUBZones opportunity to "Under the Flag" industries, helping to expand employer's availability in 76 of 78 Municipalities identified and Labor Surplus Areas.

Programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4)) and work programs authorized under section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o))

The USDA's FNS oversees a U.S. block grant to Puerto Rico that funds the Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP), which is a separate food assistance program implemented since 1982 in lieu of SNAP. Section 4142 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 mandated the completion of a study to provide information to aid the Congress in understanding the potential impact of reestablishing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in Puerto Rico in lieu of block grant funding. The block grant remains.

Under NAP (and TANF), coordination has been established to require unemployed able–bodied adults to register for work at the employment Registry of the Employment Service and seek employment. Individuals are required to participate in employment and training activities or employment interviews, and accept or continue in employment if it is adequate. An MOE funded Puerto Rico Food Benefit Program provides for a six month additional TANF benefit for food to be paid to NAP recipients who work at least 30 hours weekly, are not TANF recipients, and are single

parents or relatives living with a related minor under 18. Certain unemployed able–bodied adults are exempt from the work requirement.

Programs carried out under section 112 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 732)

The Client Assistance program remains under the Office of the Advocate of the Persons with Disabilities. The system's components that provide services to persons with disabilities will be made aware of the obligations arising under sec. 20 of the Rehabilitation Act, including providing information on means of seeking assistance under the Client Assistance program. The PRVRA, as state–designated agency for administering the core program under the Rehabilitation Act will also continue enforcing compliance section 102, providing individuals a description of services available from the client assistance program and information on how to contact the program as part of the eligibility determination process.

Programs authorized under the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12501 et seq.)

After entering into an Agreement for Grant Termination in 2005 with the National corporation of Community Services, the Commission for Volunteerism and Community Services was established under EO 2009–036 to support the reactivation of the State's participation in the programs enabled under the National and Community Services Trust Act of 1990, including Americorps. Since 2004, Act 261, as amended, has authorized the municipalities, agencies, and government instrumentalities to establish volunteer programs.Coordination between the program and TANF community services, might present an alignment opportunity. No specific provision is made under the plan to coordinate services; nevertheless, as mentioned, recommendations might be advanced to further modify the state–designated membership of the Commission with the purpose of facilitating improved coordination with the components of the workforce development system. Registered Apprenticeship Program Puerto Rico will join the rest of jurisdictions currently implementing the program. A bill has been forwarded to create the "Puerto Rico Apprenticeship Program", ascribed to the PRDOLHR, with the purpose of stimulating and assisting industries in developing and improving apprenticeship and training programs designed to provide skilled workers, in compliance with the National Apprenticeship Act of 1937. The statute will incorporate collaboration mandates with the components of the workforce system. The workforce system plans to tap on the flexibility afforded to the Registered Apprenticeship program under Title I–B's automatic eligibility status of apprenticeship sponsors, to expand the opportunities for work–related instruction, including advancing the provision of services through: • Employers who provide formal in–house instruction as well as on–the–job training at the work site • Employers who rely on a post–secondary institution, technical training school, eligible provider of adult education and literacy activities under title II to provide the instruction • Joint Apprenticeship Training Programs delivered by employers and unions • Intermediaries serving as program sponsors by taking responsibility for the administration of the apprenticeship program, providing expertise such as curriculum development, classroom instruction and supportive services, as appropriate, and including: • Educational institutions administering the program, working with employers to hire apprentices and providing classroom or on–line instruction for the apprenticeship program • Industry associations, including professional associations involved in the maintenance process of credentials for certain trades in Puerto Rico, administering the program and working with employer/members and educational entities to implement the apprenticeship program • Community–based organizations administering the program and working with employers, educational entities and the community to implement the apprenticeship program Registered Apprenticeship will also be delivered as a career pathway for job seekers and as a job–driven strategy for employers and industries. As required, procedures will be implemented by the

PRDOLHR to add Registered Apprenticeship programs to the State list of eligible training providers and to verify their status, considering timely data collection requirements on new programs, including information on occupations included in the program; method and length of instruction; and, number of active apprentices. Other appropriate Federal, State, or local programs, including employment, education, and training programs provided by public libraries or in the private sector. As mentioned in section II(b), above, a key goal for the workforce system is to implement and sustain an effective, agile and non–redundant governance structure, supported by the alignment of state workforce programs outside the plan to eliminate redundancies. That process will result in focusing the competencies and scope of programs to strategically serve the system. Local boards will be encouraged to partner with these programs to complement the delivery of services targeting special populations and to provide supportive services. Other programs can be tapped through the intermediation of required partners. Such is the case of the Social and Economic Rehabilitation Program (PRES) established by the Executive Order 5019–A of November 2, 1987. TANF coordinates with this state program by referring participants to receive follow up and supportive services while seeking employment. The program is a 100% state funded and provides educational services for the obtainment of a high school degree and entrepreneur education, self–employment, and other services to develop participant skills that will allow individuals to enter the labor market. Please, refer to sections VI.VR(c)(1) and VI.VR(e) for a description of additional programs and entities outside the plan that coordinate services with the PRVRA.

C. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS

Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required and optional one-stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality, customer-centered services, including supportive services to individuals including those populations identified in section II(a)(1)(B). The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

Employment Service and Title I One–Stop Integrated Services

The core and required partner delivery of services will revolve around a customer–centric integration and continuous improvement approach, supported by appropriate guidance seeking to align programs, local boards, operators and providers; staff cross–training on program requirements and referral procedures; and a structured process focusing on the provision on services along functional areas. Service integration in the One–Stop Centers will be led by the Employment Service and Title I staff in conjunction with the operator, and resources from Title II and the Vocational Rehabilitation program, required programs, and additional programs authorized to join the system that will remain accessible as required by section 361.305 of the proposed rule.

The model for service integration has been operationally tested and resulted in fine–tuning the following general service flow to serve job seekers at One–Stop Centers:

1. Greeting and identification of new customers or participants is completed at a common reception where the operator’s staff records control data and validates through the case management system (SIAC) if customer is new or is receiving services under a program. In case of the latter, the customer is referred to the staff coordinating services. In case claimants of Unemployment Compensation Insurance, that are scheduled to receive reemployment services, these are referred directly to the designated officials. Also, job seekers seeking employment shall be promptly serve by Wagner Peyser staff assigned with this functional task. If the job seeker is a new customer, its demographic and registration data will be uploaded in SIAC prior to be sent to receive general

orientation on available services, or to the resource center if opted to use the One–Stop resource center to obtain information, either assisted or un–assisted by staff.

2. Wagner Peyser and Title I staff will be designated to lead group sessions to provide orientation to customers and help them obtain a general understanding on the services offered through the One–Stop network.

3. If the customer opted to service him/herself to search for jobs available, prepare resume, use of telephone and resources will be guided to the One–Stop's resource center. Staff will be available to assist customers requiring help in analyzing the offers and information available. As mandated under 20 CFR 652.207, there will be capacity to deliver at every comprehensive center serving each local area, labor exchange services to employers and job seekers, through Self–service, Facilitated self–help service and Staff–assisted service.

4. Prior to receiving training or employment services, all job seekers must go through an assessment to determine their job skills and readiness. The task will be primarily facilitated by the Employment Service staff. A common assessment tool is being developed in order to account for the information requirements of all core and required partners thus facilitating jointly serving the customer.

5. Those customers deemed not ready for employment are furthered to the appropriate program to receive assistance. The referral structure is critical to the system's effectiveness and will be enabled by MOUs among the programs. The One–Stop Center staff must have a thorough understanding of program requirements and services to effectively assess the participant's eligibility under the various programs, avoid "wrong–doors" and duplication regarding the delivery of services, and ensure the efficient use of program resources and outcome achievement.

6. The system's partners will offer basic services career, individualized or any other allowable service required by the participant to be able to get or retain an employment. Once the participant is ready for employment, the program might pursue any job placement activity allowed for by the program or refer the participant back to the Employment Service.

7. If deemed ready for employment, the customer will be led to receive labor exchange services, including referral to jobs and job placement follow–up. If the participant is placed in employment, case management is provided for a period of not less than 12 months. If job placement or retention is not achieved, Wagner Peyser staff will determine what additional services, including supportive services, might be required to achieve an employment outcome.

8. Services will continue to be offered to the participant until placed in unsubsidized employment, in order to fulfill the purpose of WIOA. Post–placement follow–up will be offered for a period of not less than 12 months, to ensure compliance with the performance measures.

Please, refer to section VI.W–P(a)(1), (a)(2) and (b), for additional information on services facilitated to job seekers at the One–Stop Centers.

Youth

Local boards will be directed to identify and collaborate with new or existing youth service contract operators in order to increase services to disconnected, out–of–school youth and reconnect youth to education and jobs, taking advantage of WIOA's directive to use of 75 percent of youth program

funds for out–of–school youth ages 16 to 24, which is also a key population served by the Adult Education and Literacy program.

In serving the youth, Title I program will reach out to the Puerto Rico Research Alliance for Dropout Prevention to benefit from early warning systems and to identify interventions to help improve outcomes for students at risk. In the efforts of engaging out–of–school youth (OSY), both the Adult Education and Literacy program and the lead of the PRDE's representative in the local boards will be called upon to strengthen the coordination with school districts. Local boards will also be encouraged to coordinate with other programs servicing the youth, like the Foster Care and TANF programs administered by the PRDOF, the Youth Development Program at PRDEDC, youth employment programs being managed by the PRDOLHR, residential programs and community–based initiatives.

Please, refer to section VI.I–B(c)(1) and (2), for additional information on youth services.

Adult

Capacity building efforts under Title I will focus on work–based training. On–the–Job Training continues to be a key method of delivering training services to both adult and dislocated workers. The flexibility afforded to local areas under WIOA to increase the reimbursement level on OJT to up to 75 percent will be leveraged through appropriate guidance to expand this activity. The program will also target the implementation of the Registered Apprenticeship program and pre–apprenticeship programs expanding career pathway opportunities with industry–based training coupled with classroom instruction as a means to support the supply on middle–skills.

Through the implementation of appropriate guidance and as an alternative to OJT, Title I will leverage the allowance for local areas to use up to 10 percent of its adult and dislocated worker funds to provide transitional jobs to individuals, which are time–limited subsidized work experiences in the public, private, or non–profit sectors for individuals with barriers to employment who are chronically unemployed or have an inconsistent work history. As directed under TEGL 3–15, the guidance will encompass policies and plans on the amount reimbursements would be for the jobs, what supportive services should be included, and any limits on the duration of the transitional job; and identify employers (public, private or nonprofit) that can provide quality experiences for individuals to eventually obtain unsubsidized employment.

Dislocated Workers

Aside from the provision of Title I services for dislocated workers, and coordination with the TAA program, as described in section III(a)(2)(B), providing incumbent worker training will be a key activity to further the strategy of protecting employment in key sectors. Through appropriate guidance, local boards will be encouraged to leverage the allowance of up to 20 percent of their adult and dislocated worker funds to provide for the federal share of the cost of providing incumbent worker training to help avert potential layoffs of employees, especially of those that entail a statewide impact. At the State level, current guidance will be reviewed and updated to reinforce the use of set–aside funding to support layoff aversion and employment protection through incumbent worker training.

Customized training will also be pursued in order to meet the special requirements of an employer or group of employers.

Title II Services

The One–Stop Centers' network will be complemented by Title II activities administered by the Adult Education and Literacy program being offered at 119 locations located in 49 municipalities, 87 of which offer services during night hours and 65 conversational English classes. As a core service, Title II will support the One Stop service delivery system in helping participants attain a secondary school diploma; transition to postsecondary education and training through the use of career pathways, integrated education and training; and receive workforce preparation activities and services needed to succeed in the labor market. The program resources will be prioritized and coordinated with partnering programs to shore up services reflecting the workforce system needs.

The first priority service under the program will address the needs for Adult Basic Education, especially among disadvantaged, low–income adults and criminal offenders. The program assesses the participants' skills and provides them the literacy and math skills necessary to become literate at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family and in society. The services are delivered in a non–threatening environment and comprise basic academic competencies, digital literacy and self–management skills that provide adults with the skills to identify and secure employment, advance on the job, improve parenting and interpersonal skills and continue on to adult secondary classes.

The program will continue to coordinate with the PRDCR to address the needs of eligible adult literacy participants in juvenile detention centers and correctional facilities through collaborative services that include: vocational training, adult literacy courses, personal and workforce preparation counseling and cross training of teachers. The Special Education staff is also integrated in the planning function since a significant number of inmates are also adults with disabilities.

First order of priority will also be afforded to English language instruction. While English is provided throughout the sequence of K–12, it is taught as a second language since the native and language of instruction for all curricula, except for the English courses, is the Spanish language. During the academic year 2015, the program served 1,451 students who participated in the Conversational English as a Second Language. As the global economy and technological demands place a bigger challenge on students to acquire an additional language, many participants are motivated to become bilingual. In view of this trend, the PRDE has made its priority to play an active role in facilitating the participants' goal of becoming bilingual.

English classes and Conversational English will continue to be provided as part of the Adult Education Program offered in the schools and Adult Education program centers. The objectives of the conversational ESL and academic English programs are to provide adults with the knowledge and skills necessary to make correct use of the English language in academic as well as in work settings; develop adults' listening, reading, writing and oral skills, and measure their performance using the English program standards and performance measures established for English as a Second Language. ESL classes have a high degree of functionality and a hands–on approach, which enhances its relevance for Spanish speakers who are learning English to access employment or advance in a workplace environment.

The second order of priority for delivering program services focuses on adults in need of workplace literacy services. The objective is to develop the required skills and knowledge so as to enable participants to obtain, retain, or upgrade their employment once they complete the specialized training or vocational education. Targeted populations are disadvantage adults, adults with disabilities, single parents and displaced homemakers. The goal of the services is to address the

specific needs of the workforce and to improve workers' productivity. These activities are delivered at the workplace and/or at employment development centers; the content is tailored to the needs of the workforce and remains accessible to participants, including continuous learning through the use of technology and in coordination with groups and resources in the community to supplement services. The service fully supports integrated service delivery under WIOA through the provision life–long learning and an accessible and non–threatening environment many adult learners require. During academic year 2015, the Program served 37 students who participated in Workplace literacy activities.

Third order of priority for delivering services will target individuals facing barriers to employment, especially disadvantaged and homeless adults, single parents, adults with disabilities and displaced homemakers. These will be served through an Adult Basic Education program, which aims to improve basic skills in language and mathematics. These programs provide adults with academic, employability and self–improvement skills to assist them in attaining a secondary school diploma and in the transition to postsecondary education and training, through career pathways. As it is standard for adult education programs, the services are offered in a non–threatening environment, which promote accessibility and the necessary flexibility to ensure meeting the needs of participants. In PY2014, one of the most requested services at the One Stop Centers was Literacy and Numeracy for Adults and Dislocated Workers and Alternative Education for Youth, in order to acquire basic skills in English, Mathematics and Spanish, necessary to complete high school or obtain the GED. Complete secondary education is key to enter employment.

A fourth priority targets immigrant and disadvantaged adults, homeless adults, single parents and displaced homemakers through Family Literacy programs. Improving student performance by improving the literacy level of parents is a strategy that has proven successful in the Adult Education program. This is accomplished by providing parents with the necessary skills and self–confidence to support their children's learning needs, become active partners in the education process as well as able tutors of their children and become better parents, and improve their personal skills. During academic year 2015, the program served 60 students who participated in the Family literacy services. The next order of priority in delivering services will be afforded to Adult Secondary Education services for disadvantaged adults, individuals with disabilities, the homeless, incarcerated adults, adults with disabilities, single parents and displaced homemakers at level three or above who need to attain a high school diploma or high school equivalency and transition to postsecondary education.

Identification and outreach of adults with disabilities will continue to be supported through technical assistance provided by staff from the Special Education program that cross–trains Title II and CTE's staff. Conversely, referral procedures have been established to lead participants to receive CTE and Special Education services.

The completeness and quality of services under Title II will be supported by the implementation of new information systems (SIA) capable of maintaining a more accurate account of the number of participants from each program that are impacted along with respective outcomes, through specific variables that have been incorporated into the tracking system and data collection processes. Additional accountability is warranted through the 13 indicators by which service providers will be evaluated.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services

The PRVRA provides a wide range of services to people with disabilities, in order to integrate them into the workforce, including: training in personal/occupational settings, pre–employment services, counseling, and job readiness services (resumes, interviews, identification of candidates ready for employment and referrals to job offers), among others. It also sponsors trainings in various accredited educational institutions to facilitate customers acquiring the knowledge and occupational skills necessary to perform in the workplace.

Moreover, the PRVRA works directly with employers to develop employment opportunities for people with disabilities. To this end, it has qualified personnel in various disciplines, the main one being the vocational rehabilitation counselor. The staff from the PRVRA's Centers for Support and Employment Modes provide guidance to employers on available services, advice on the benefits derived from training and recruiting persons with disabilities, among other services. A case in point is the Employers' Forum, which is conducted each year in collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council.

The PRVRA will continue to serve the people with disabilities in order to integrate them into the workforce. In addition to supporting full access of services through the One–Stop Centers, the ARV continue to serve youth and students with disabilities, with emphasis on those with significant disabilities, and in need of Pre–Employment Transition services. To this end, the Administration will maintain its collaboration with the PRDE's Special Education program to accelerate the implementation of the students' individualized plans, continue offering guidance in schools to students, parents and school staff, and participate in PPT meetings.

An MOU with the Job Corps program will be implemented, and other agreements will be pursued to identify out–of–school youth (OSY) that can benefit from the vocational rehabilitation services, including other residential programs like Foster Care or Youth Challenge. As agreed to with Job Corps, PRVRA staff will provide guidance on the Job Corps' premises and will provide services to eligible youth referred to Job Corps, while Job Corps, in turn, will refer to the PRVRA young people with disabilities in need of services.

Please, refer to section VI.VR(c)(1) for a description of collaboration agreements between the PRVRA and other entities.

D. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS

Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, any Combined State Plan partner program included in this plan, required and optional one-stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality services to employers to meet their current and projected workforce needs. The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

As previously mentioned, a dedicated business service workflow will tend the specific needs of SMBs/SMEs and promote the use of One Stop Centers' facilities and/or staff to employers who might need it for prescreening, interviewing or other allowable activities. The service will be primarily by Wagner–Peyser staff and Title I staff functioning as a "Business Services Team" to serve employers. This team has the competencies and capacity to coordinate the appropriate services to assist employers, coordinate activities across one–stop center partner programs, and enhance business awareness of sector strategies. All core programs will coordinate their job promoters to layout common outreach plans and activities to present One Voice, One Message, One Team unified approach for the One–Stop Centers network in its communications with employers. The

resources of the Puerto Rico Commerce and Exports Company will also be leveraged in providing customized services to business customers.

The One Stop Centers network will support business as a recruitment, interview, and hiring Center. The One Stop Center will continue to provide the necessary technology services, the staff and WIOA core services to assist businesses and industry in the hiring process.

Services to employers include:

• Interviews and screening of job candidates to select skilled and trained personnel who will fill their labor force needs

• Labor market information

• Membership in the State, local boards, working groups, sector partnerships, employers' committees, among other entities, to intervene in policymaking for education, training and employment in the local, regional and statewide levels

• Use of the One Stop Center network and systems to disseminate job offers

• Incentives, subsidies, follow–up and supportive services to employees, including initial services to obtain with Health and Drug Testing, criminal records, and required certifications for prospective employees

In addition to technical services provided to employers, the PRDOLHR's integration will facilitate access to unemployment compensation services for employers, and other programs expanding employment options.

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a Federal tax credit incentive provided to private sector businesses for hiring individuals from twelve target groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment. The WOTC joins other workforce programs that help incentivize workplace diversity and facilitate the access of targeted individuals to good jobs and gradually move from economic dependency into self–sufficiency.

The Employment Service staff:

• Determine eligibility of individuals as members of targeted groups, on a timely basis.

• Issue employer certifications, denials, or notices of invalidation for tax credit on a timely basis.

• Maintain a system and procedures to regularly monitor the activities initiate appropriate corrective actions.

• Manage agreements with TANF and NAP in Puerto Rico serving the majority of WOTC applications, which are from participants of the TANF or NAP programs and train staff from these programs.

• Maintain the current cooperative efforts with employment and training organizations already working with the private sector, such as Veterans organizations, Job Service Employer Committees and local boards, to inform employers about requirements for the use of WOTC.

• Train, as appropriate, State and participating agency staff and provide monitoring and technical assistance to these agencies.

• Engage in outreach efforts in order to get more qualifying employers to use the tax credit program and increase our number of certifications.

Please, refer to section VI.W–P(e)(3)(B)(ii) for additional information on services to agricultural employers; and section VI.VR(g) for additional information on coordination activities with employers in the PRVRA.

E. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Describe how the State's Strategies will engage the State's community colleges and area career and technical education schools, as partners in the workforce development system to create a job-driven education and training system. WIOA section 102(b)(2)(B)(iv).

As previously discussed, the State Board will coordinate with the PRDE's State Board for Career and Technical Education, the PRDOLHR and the education services industry, the effective delivery of occupational education for high–

demand, mid and high–skilled and/or technologically advanced occupations.

The State Board will assume its convening functions under WIOA to leverage the resources and concert the support of the Education Council, the PRDE, IHEs and CTE institutions to adopt a common framework to support the implementation of career pathways and to further the alignment of the educational and workforce systems. Educational institutions will also be engaged as providers of educational and training services and are critical to the successful implementation of the Registered Apprenticeship program.

Regarding services for students with disabilities, Act 51–1996, as amended, mandates coordination between the PRDE's Special Education Program and the PRVRA, among other agencies, with the purpose of ensuring a seamless transition of young people with disabilities to postsecondary education. The PRVRA intervenes in the process of transition before eligible students with disabilities graduate from or exit the school system, and facilitates the insertion in training programs and post–secondary educational institutions. The PRVRA sponsors to consumers such training in various accredited educational institutions for the purpose of acquiring knowledge and occupational skills necessary for the workplace.

In terms of serving individuals with barriers to employment, along with basic adult education, PRDE's CTE program is key to meet the workforce development needs of the correctional population. Please, refer to section III(a)(2)(B) for additional information regarding coordination with the Carl D. Perkins program.

F. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS.

Describe how the State's Strategies will engage the State's other education and training providers, including providers on the state's eligible training provider list, as partners in the workforce development system to create a job-driven education and training system.

The flexibility afforded by WIOA will be used to engage and expand the amount and type of training providers. For instance, the implementation of the Registered Apprenticeship program could allow the involvement of unions, trade associations as well as established providers like IHEs and community colleges as training providers.

As required under WIOA, the State maintains a publicly accessible list of eligible training providers and their eligible training programs, including relevant performance and cost information. The State Board adopted procedures for initial determination of eligibility and subsequent certification of training providers.

In issuing a determination, local boards are required to:

• Analyze the impact of economic, geographic and demographic factors, and the characteristics of the populations served by applicants, including their difficulties to access or provide services, if any.

• Determine the occupations for which they are requesting training services, which shall be those in demand in the geographic region covered by the local board.

• Keep the process of initial eligibility determination open throughout the year.

• Establish eligibility criteria, requirements for additional information and minimum performance levels for providers of training beyond what is required by the State Board, which might be applicable to the specific local area.

• Safeguard the confidentiality of personally identifiable information of any education records, including the circumstances related to prior consent, and comply with the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

• Periodically invite public and private educational institutions and community–based organizations to submit applications for initial or subsequent eligibility determination as providers of training for occupations in demand.

• Regarding apprenticeship programs, promote de automatic inclusion of providers in the State List after a request is made by a registered provider under the provisions of the Registered Apprenticeship Act and enabling State provisions.

• Procedures for on–the–job training; customized training; incumbent worker training; transitional employment; or the circumstances described at WIOA sec. 134(c)(3)(G)(ii).

Exception made of Registered Apprenticeship, One–Stop Centers' operators are required to collect performance information and determine whether the providers meet the performance criteria. Providers that meet the criteria are considered eligible providers of training services.

Please refer to VI.I–B(b)(3) for provider eligibility procedures regarding Youth, Adult and Dislocated Workers program; section VI.II(b) for Adult Education and Family Literacy program; and section VI.VR(e) for Vocational Rehabilitation providers.

G. LEVERAGING RESOURCES TO INCREASE EDUCATIONAL ACCESS

Describe how the State's strategies will enable the State to leverage other Federal, State, and local investments that have enhanced access to workforce development programs at the above institutions, described in section (E).

Maximizing available funding and the leveraging of non–traditional funding sources to support the improvement of the workforce system is a key goal of the State Unified Plan. PRDE's lead in developing career pathways will allow combining the efforts and resources available to both Title II and Carl D. Perkins programs to advance their implementation, thus expanding the flexibility of the postsecondary educational system.

Collaboration with the PRDOF will add to the workforce system, resources available through TANF vocational education services and the Chafee Education and Training Voucher program, representing additional opportunities to serve the workforce needs of low–income individuals and youth. Through continued coordination, State resources currently devoted to provide for bridge education, vocational education, subsidies and tax expenditures can also be leveraged to support the system. A case in point, the PRVRA intends to request funding from the State's Employment and Training Opportunities Development Fund, which accrues 1% of all taxable salaries paid by employers' beneficiaries under the Employment Security Act and the proceeds of interest paid on the Benefits for Non Occupational Disabilities Law.

An enhanced coordination with the PREC will allow the harvesting of data being supplied by educational institutions under local and federal mandates to retrofit the educational and workforce systems. Additional opportunities could arise by devising ways in which the Council's State student financial assistance programs support the strategies of the system.

Local areas will be encouraged to leverage the resources of required partners to support the delivery of integrated services, through financial and non–financial agreements. Many of the arrangements for sharing other state resources must be worked out in detail at local level involving other agencies and the local One–Stop Centers' partners, through MOUs.

A key strategy in leveraging other Federal investments that have enhanced access to workforce development programs at educational institutions is to equip the State Board to manage the function of identifying and seeking additional or dormant competitive funding opportunities that can benefit any component of the workforce development system. DEI and REO, among others, represent additional opportunities. To that end, the State is committed to advance the designation of the local boards as 501(c)(3) tax–exempted non–for profits to leverage non–traditional sources of grant funding.

Regarding local governments, through guidance pertaining the local area and regional planning processes, there is also the opportunity to encourage Chief Elected Officials to sponsor municipal tax abatement measures and other benefits to reward businesses and employers sponsoring the implementation of career pathways.

Moreover, the MIP financial system was modified to require to local areas to quantify the contributions of the municipalities in local areas and One–Stop Centers. Local contributions are defined as any expense or non–federal contribution that is used for support the programs. It includes cash as well as in–kind contributions. The Financial Guidelines contains specific instructions to calculate and report on these contributions. As part of the planning process local areas are required to submit the following information:

• Forecast of local contributions to the One–Stop Center

• Projection on how much in cash would be contributed

• Information on cash and in–kind contributions

• In relation to in–kind contributions, description of how these are calculated and evidence to be used to document them

H. IMPROVING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS

Describe how the State's strategies will improve access to activities leading to recognized postsecondary credentials, including Registered Apprenticeship certificates. This includes credentials that are industry-recognized certificates, licenses or certifications, and that are portable and stackable.

As discussed, the offer of postsecondary education in Puerto Rico has grown significantly in the past decade, with mid–skilled level education being the segment with the largest expansion. Even within, institutions of higher education, the advance in mid–skilled careers, certificates and degrees has been noticeable. In 2010, IHE's graduated 24,949 students with bachelor's degree or higher, and 10,770 with attainments less than bachelor's. In 2014, the number of IHE graduates with bachelor's degree or higher grew to 27,590, while the number of those that graduated with less than a bachelor's degree ballooned to 24,709.

Although the dynamics are varied, along with the growth in the number of institutions providing career and technical education (from 302 to 333 in the span of the last academic year), the increase in mid–skilled graduates evidences that access to a postsecondary degree and credentials has become somewhat more flexible in recent years and that there is a sizable infrastructure to support it. Please, refer to section II(a)(2)(A), for additional information on the education infrastructure and credentialing activities in the jurisdiction.

Under WIOA, alignment activities will be pursued to engage the providers of education and training to implement strategies that facilitate access to postsecondary credentials. As explained in section III(c)(1), above, the State will advance the implementation of career pathways to expand the accessibility industry recognized credentials. The strategy is key to provide participants with multiple entry points to accommodate academic readiness and multiple exit points to permit on ramp and off ramp when necessary, to lead to industry–recognized credentials, as recommended by the USDOL.

Please, refer to Section III(a)(2)(B), for information regarding the implementation of the Registered Apprenticeship program.

I. COORDINATING WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES.

Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be coordinated with economic development entities, strategies and activities in the State.

As highlighted before, the reorganization mandated by Act 171–2014, which transferred the Workforce Development Program from the PRDOLHR to the PRDEDC, will further the integration of workforce and economic development activities required under WIOA. Therein lie significant collaboration opportunities with PRDEDC's departmental units, including the Federal Contracting Center, the One–Stop entrepreneur support network managed by the Puerto Rico Commerce and Exports Company, the Office of Industrial Tax Incentives, the State's Youth Development Program, and the Commonwealth's Regional Center for EB–5. Under the Department's lead, Labor Surplus Areas could be actively promoted to increase HUBZones' to employers and business; affirmative employment by federal contractors can be more effectively enforced; and the mechanisms in place for convening industrial partnerships and organizing industrial clusters can be made available to the State Board for advancing sector strategies.

A key strategy for weaving economic and workforce development among State entities is to coordinate with the State agencies entrusted with certifying the concession of tax incentives under various State programs, with the purpose of resourcing their job creation mandates through the workforce development system's pool of qualified jobseekers, especially of younger workers and persons with disabilities accessing the labor force.

Tax incentives conditioned to employment promotion: Act – Conditions (Source: State Act 187–2015)

? Sec. 5(a), Act 72–1962, Act for the Regulation of the Milk Industry :Incentives available under the Act are subject to demonstrable job creation ? Act 168–1968, Healthcare Facilities Incentives Act :Incentives available under the Act are contingent to demonstrable job creation ? Act 47–1987, Public and Private Sector Copartnership for the New Housing Operation Act:Incentives available under the Act are contingent to demonstrable job creation ? Sec. 5.43(a), Act 83–1991, Property Tax Act:Property tax exemption granted for activities creating new agricultural jobs ? Sec. 2–A(a), Act 225–1995, Farming Incentives Act:Subsidized activities shall create new agricultural jobs ? Sec. 2(a) Act 165–1996, Rental Housing Program for Low–Income Older Persons:The rental projects receiving incentives shall stimulate new jobs creation ? Sec. 1A(a), Act 73–2008, Industrial Incentives Act :The industrial activity receiving incentives shall create new jobs ? Sec. 1A(a), Act 74–2010, Tourism Development Incentives Act :The tourism activity receiving incentives shall create new jobs ? Art. 2.17(a)(1), Act 83–2010, Green Energy Fund :All beneficiaries shall provide assurance of job creation in order to receive funding ? Act 1–2013, Jobs Now Act :All benefits are subject to job creation parameters

As mentioned before, the government's downsizing has resulted in a strong policy favoring the expansion of private sector employment, self–employment and entrepreneurship. All core programs, and a significant number of required, additional and State programs deliver services and support workforce development activities for SME's/SMB's.

B. STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a description of the State operating systems and policies that will support the implementation of the State strategy described in **Section II Strategic Elements** . This includes—

1. THE STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S STRATEGIES. THIS MUST INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF–

A. STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS THAT SUPPORT COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGIES (E.G., LABOR MARKET INFORMATION SYSTEMS, DATA SYSTEMS, COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS, CASE-MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS, JOB BANKS, ETC.).

Workforce and labor market information systems

The workforce and labor market information system (WLMI) established under section 49l–2 of the Wagner Peyser Act is administered by the PRDOLHR. The Department also maintains a Bureau of Labor Statistics and a Research Division on Occupational Skills and administers the Occupational Employment and Wages Survey, the Nonfarm Employment Survey, and special surveys, studies and research. The products are readily available at http://www.mercadolaboral.pr.gov/.

Puerto Rico complies with the Workforce Information Database (WIDb) requirements and will have completed transitioning to version 2.6 by June 2016, ensuring comparability with State jurisdictions regarding employment projections; wages; information on occupational licenses, as well as data from national sources on educational programs; the locations of educational and training institutions; and contact information for all U.S. employers.

The PRDOLHR maintains a WLMI fully accessible for a range of customer groups, including job seekers, employers and policymakers. State and local industry and occupational employment projections are maintained for long–term (10 years) and short–term (2 years), as well as for statewide and sub–state levels. The State uses the Local Employment and Wages Information System (LEWIS), to derive staffing patterns for sub–state projections.

As required by USDOL, the PRDOLHR also produces a statewide annual economic analysis report, an essential tool for strategic planning for WIOA and other workforce programs. The report provides information and analyses that can support workforce planning and the process of making policy decisions for workforce development, education, economic development and business engagement around sector strategies and career pathways initiatives. The report's analysis for 2015 has been integrated in the Unified Plan, and will be further used in the formulation of regional and local area plans under WIOA.

Puerto Rico also used a portion of its 2015 JD NEG funding to plan for a Strategic Workforce Information Management System consisting of a comprehensive Labor Market Information (LMI) database, a new integrated matchmaking platform for job opportunities, and a platform to offer online bilingual coaching and training for residents and stateside individuals interested in relocating to the Commonwealth.

The plan proposes to initiate coordination with federal data producers to make sure Puerto Rico is included in reports, series, surveys and statistical products that are available for other state jurisdictions and are accessible through the USDOL websites. Among other, these include the following products:

• Current Population Survey. Monthly survey of households conducted by the Bureau of Census for the BLS. It provides a comprehensive body of data on the labor force, employment, unemployment, persons not in the labor force, hours of work, earnings, and other demographic and labor force characteristics.

• Longitudinal Employer–Household Dynamics (LEHD). LEHD links employee and employer records from an array of data sources (administrative records, demographic surveys and censuses). LEHD's principal product is its Quarterly Workforce Indicators (QWI), which include employment, job creation, monthly earnings, and worker turnover data by locale as well as by detailed industry, gender, and age of workers. Although all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have joined the LED Partnership, the LEHD program is not yet producing public–use statistics for Puerto Rico.

• Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS). JOLTS collects data on total employment, job openings, hires, quits, layoffs & discharges, and other separations. BLS issues the data monthly.

• Business Dynamics Statistics (BDS). Provides annual measures of business dynamics (such as job creation and destruction, establishment births and deaths, and firm startups and shutdowns) for the economy and aggregated by establishment and firm characteristics.

• Multiple Jobholders. BLS defines multiple jobholders as wage or salary workers who hold 2 or more jobs, self–employed workers who also hold a wage or salary job, or unpaid family workers who also hold a wage or salary job. Individual state data on multiple jobholders from 1994 to the present is available upon request.

• County Employment and Wages (QCEW). BLS produces this series from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program. Wages represent total compensation paid during the calendar quarter, regardless of when during that quarter the individual worked. Publicly available for San Juan MSA.

• Minimum Wage Workers. Statistics on hourly–paid workers with earnings at or below the prevailing Federal minimum wage.

• National Compensation Survey–Wages. The BLS National Compensation Survey of Wages (NCS–W) covers over 800 occupations (although data are not provided for individual occupations), and publishes wage data annually for about 80 metropolitan areas. The data include average earnings and weekly hours for such variables as private sector vs. government employees; occupation; full–vs. part–time; union vs. non–union; goods– vs. service–producing industry; number of employees per establishment; wages at various percentiles; and other variables.

• USDOE's State Assessment of Adult Literacy and State and County Estimates of Low Literacy. The SAAL is conducted in conjunction with the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL).

• Annual Survey of Manufactures. Census Bureau's detailed survey by manufacturing sub–industry category. Employment data cover the number of employees; annual payroll; and the number of production workers, their wages and their working hours.

• Annual Survey of Government Employees. The Census Bureau conducts a sample Annual Survey of Government Employees, which collects data on full and part–time employment, pay, and working hours. The Bureau collects local data but only reports it at the state level. Data are also reported by

functional area (e.g., elementary and secondary education; higher education; police or fire protection; financial administration; judicial and legal; etc.).

• Non–employer Statistics. The Census Bureau annually issues Non–Employer Statistics, which cover businesses without paid employees. Most non–employers are self–employed individuals operating very small–unincorporated businesses, which may not be the owner's principal source of income. These firms are excluded from most other business statistics (except the Survey of Business Owners).

• Personal Income, Compensation and Employment. The Bureau of Economic Analysis reports on 1) full–and part–time employment by major industry, and 2) wage and salary employment by industry. At both the state and local levels, income data include breakdowns of personal income plus earnings, wage and salary disbursements, and compensation by major industry.

A key component of the WLMI system, Puerto Rico is about to complete the implementation K–12 Statewide Longitudinal Data System Initiative (SLDS) increasing visibility throughout the primary and secondary education systems. The ultimate objective of the SLDS is to enhance education policy and operational decisions with hard data pertaining to student achievement over time. It also aims to establish the necessary organizational, political, procedural, systemic and human resource mechanisms necessary to perpetuate its use by education stakeholders at all levels. One immediate outcome will be enhanced capabilities for identifying out–of–school youth (OSY) in need of services by the workforce system.

The K–12 SLDS Project began in 2012 and is in its final year of implementation. The system integrates data from PRDE's Student Information System (SIS) which collects information from all students enrolled in the public education system, PRDE's Finance Information System and data from the Special Education program, data on students limitations in the Spanish language, among other data. Training on the use of the portal is being delivered to approximately 5,000 users. Data governance protocols are also being completed.

The Adult Education and Family Literacy program integrates the Data Governance and Stewarding Committee and coordinates the integration of data collected on the Adults Information System on the longitudinal system's portal enabling accessibility on the program's data, and enhancing the capabilities for data reporting and analysis to support decision–making processes. The PRDE expects to map the extension of system to evolve into a statewide P–20W system.

The Education Council collects, analyzes and disseminates detailed data on K–12 educational institutions, vocational and technical institutions, and IHEs. Data available at: http://cepr.cespr.org/ceprd/index.asp.

Data, communication and case management systems

SIAC. The SIAC is the case management system for the One–Stop Centers network. It is a web–based data collecting, reporting and case management system using the ETA's WIASRD protocols, Trade Adjustment Performance Report and Employment Service data structures. The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico prioritized system improvements along the following capabilities identified by the US GAO: performing edit checks to prevent data errors; identifying dates TAA participants completed WIA/WIOA and ES–funded services; and allowing staff to query the system to assess data reliability and completeness.

The system maintains customer information, including a minimum level of information collection that is necessary to comply with Equal Opportunity requirements. Interim changes being incorporated to SIAC in order to comply with WIOA requirements include:

• Adding and/or editing Adult/DW WIOA Services without affecting the E–DRVS system edit checks for the related data elements.

• Adding and/or editing Youth WIOA Elements without affecting the E–DRVS system edit checks for the related data elements.

• Revision of the eligible training providers Web Based System (SELEP).

• Establishment of a more detailed case management module for participants and employers.

• Performance reporting by service providers.

• Requirement of employment related information like employer name, county, zip, NAICS code, O*Net code and Commonwealth Business Registry Code.

SELEP. The State List of Training Service Providers and Eligibility System (SELEP, by its Spanish acronym) is a web–based system to streamline and standardize the determination of eligibility of entities and educational programs to form part of the State List of Training Service Providers. The system allows providers interested in joining the list to complete their applications online. At the same time, and according to procedures of each local area, the providers must submit supporting application documentation through the system. The system also provides information on status and determination regarding applications. The system also allows local areas to publish occupations in demand in the geographical area. It also provides the capability to submit related data to the State Board. It will be updated to further comply with the publication of data pertaining providers as required by WIOA.

SERR. The WDP also maintains the Standardized System for Rapid Response Services (SERR, by its Spanish acronym) to manage Rapid Response related information.

MIP. The Accounting Information System (MIP) is used by the WDP to keep accounting data on WIOA federal funds allocated to local areas, as well as disbursements to participants and providers, and administrative and operational concepts of expenditure. All local areas 15 must provide the data required by the system, regardless the use of internal financial information systems.

Claimants' Services Web Portal. The system allows filing an unemployment insurance claim online. Users can file an initial claim for unemployment benefits if they have worked in Puerto Rico for at least two quarters within the last 18 months and became unemployed due to reasons beyond their control. Any application submitted after 5pm, from Monday to Friday, will be processed the next working day. Time to complete the application should not exceed 30 minutes. Also, claims are accepted by phone at (787) 945–7900, a service available during regular working hours.

SIS. The Puerto Rico Adult Education data collection reporting system uses the Student Information System (SIS) designed to help providers collecting, analyzing and using data to identify and implement strategies to achieve expected levels of performance. Current efforts are focused on the Adult Information System, which will strengthen compliance with NRS requirements. The Adult Information System is an application that manages the processing of information in the different

functional areas; it complies with the regulations and requirements of the Adult Educational System and manages the required Federal reporting for the NRS System. The application allows for the simultaneous creation and administration of locations independent of each other. It is web–based with an integrated security protocol and conveniently designed in modules.

The application has the capability of generating transactions following a procedural flow with requirements and authorizations for admissions, assigning staff, programming of courseware, registration, creation of file documents, and academic matters. It also processes the electronic filing of documents by capturing a variety of documentation already in the system; minimizing in this way the filing of forms and conversion of documents to digital form within different functional areas. Users can generate follow–up files in a digitally centralized way for each functional area; reports are selected depending upon level of security access and the users' functional roles.

CRIS. The PRVRA maintains the Consumer Rehabilitation Information System. It keeps data on services provided to applicants and consumers, and the data required for federal and state reporting. CRIS is not currently integrated with the PRDOLHR or the One–Stop systems. The case management case management capabilities of the system have been updated to collect data on Pre–Employment Transition Services delivered students with disabilities.

Job Banks

PR.JOBS is the PRDOLHR's official Job Bank. This resource, available to employers and job seekers in general, is provided free of cost by Direct Employers as part of an agreement to NASWA to provide such valuable tool to State Workforce Agencies. NASWA has a partnership with Direct Employers until 2017. Direct Employers Job Central is a web clearinghouse operated by Direct Employers where employers can post available jobs and recruit eligible job candidates; job seekers may also search for job openings and apply for employment.

Job Central uses the O*NET Autocoder to assign occupational codes. The Direct Employers uses a version that has been upgraded extensively since the original and will not recode jobs uploaded from a state workforce agency site unless they have a valid SOC/O*NET code assigned.

First launched in October 2012, more than 300 new employers have been registered and, along with members of Direct Employers, post daily over 900 job offers in specialized and highly technical jobs, hospitality industry, health, education and many others. Every month approximately 2,000 new job seekers register by creating a new account.

Upon registration in PR.JOBS a job seeker will have access to a vast network of employers and can publish their resume online and get access to skills transferability tools like MyNextMove and MySkillsMyFuture. A registered employer will find a network of jobseekers in search of employment and can search their resumes online matching their job opportunity and allowing them to extend an invitation for an interview totally transparent to the job seeker.

As part of the enhancements to these systems, plans are to integrate PR.JOBS into the SIAC system to push PR.JOBS content into SIAC and vice versa to reach a maximum number of job seekers. Once the integration is completed, SIAC will be able to download all job offers posted in PR.JOBS into SIAC and to upload those job offers published directly in SIAC by Wagner–Peyser staff on a daily basis.

Labor Exchange System. PR.JOBS currently gathers unduplicated job opportunities from verified employers. However, Wagner–Peyser's Labor Exchange System (within SIAC) does not benefit from PR.JOBS and its more than 900 job opportunities published daily.

As mentioned above, we plan to push the content of PR.JOBS into the Labor Exchange System (SIAC) and vice versa, to reach a higher number of job seekers. Once completed, we plan to leverage PR.JOBS exclusive job openings on over 900 highly technical occupations on the pharmaceutical, hospitality, health, education and other industries in Puerto Rico. This will enhance the matching of job seekers with employer's job opportunities.

Improvements to the job matching platform will have to integrate PR.JOBS and SIAC so all offers in PR.JOBS become available to be matched by SIAC.

B. DATA-COLLECTION AND REPORTING PROCESSES USED FOR ALL PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING THOSE PRESENT IN ONE-STOP CENTERS*.

SIAC. The system is based on the reporting and record keeping requirements contained in the WIASRD/ES/TAPR documentation handbooks that are designed to strengthen the USDOL's various program performance reporting systems into a single streamlined reporting structure. This comprehensive reporting structure features a set of uniform quarterly report formats for capturing services to employer and job seeker customers across programs, including a special report on services to the nation's veterans, other eligible persons, and transitioning service members. A standardized set of data elements that includes information on participant demographics, types of services received, and performance outcomes based on a set of common measures defined consistently across programs are key components of this reporting structure. This system is utilized to respond more quickly and effectively to the management information needs of the ETA, the Congress and the general public.

The SIAC system contains important reporting and record keeping instructions for use by all grantees administering Wagner–Peyser, VETS, WIOA's Title IB, NEG, and TAA programs funded by USDOL. Its main components are:

• Quarterly Reports on Services to Job Seeker Customers. Contains two standardized quarterly report formats and related instructions that support grantee reporting on services to job seeker customers, including veterans, other eligible persons, and transitioning service members, and performance outcomes based on a set of common measures and other appropriate performance indicators as required by statute.

• WIA Standardized Record Data. Contains a general introduction to assist grantees in understanding how to read the individual record layout, and includes a complete list of data elements (with definitions) considered important to the management and evaluation of workforce programs providing participant services. Coding values, field size/data type markers, and an applicability guide that maps each data element to one or more workforce programs are also included to place each data collection item in its proper context.

• The Trade Act Participant Report (TAPR). Puerto Rico is required to maintain standardized individual records containing characteristics, activities and outcomes information for all individuals who receive services or benefits financially assisted by the Trade Adjustment Assistance program. These individual records are collectively known as the Trade Act Participant Report (TAPR).

The primary purposes of the TAPR are to:

• Establish a standardized set of data elements, definitions, and specifications that can be used to describe the characteristics, activities, and outcomes of individuals served by the TAA program.

• Facilitate the collection and reporting of valid, consistent, and complete information on an individual in order to support the overall management, evaluation, and continuous improvement of the program at the local, state, and federal levels.

• Share program performance results with consumers, taxpayers, Congress and other relevant stakeholders with an interest in the TAA program.

The TAPR establishes a core set of data that must be collected and maintained by the Commonwealth. These records are comprised of client information that is matched to outcome information obtained from Unemployment Insurance (UI) and other administrative wage records, or from other supplemental data sources as appropriate. A TAPR file should be opened on an individual when the participant begins receiving a service or benefit financially assisted by the TAA program following a determination of eligibility to participate in the program. Receipt of a waiver from the training requirement, TRA payments, and other allowances are considered TAA program benefits, and states are required to submit a TAPR file on all such individuals who receive these benefits. At that time, the participant characteristics should be entered and the pre–program wage record data obtained.

As the individual receives additional benefits and services while participating in the TAA program, those should be entered, where appropriate, in the participant's record. Finally, once the participant is determined to have exited, the outcomes data and post–program wage records should be obtained and entered. Once all post–program wage data become available, the record should be ready for submission to the Department.

SIS. The Adult Information System complies with the regulations and requirements of the Adult Educational System and manages the required Federal reporting for the NRS System.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services. The PRVRA system collects data for the RSA–911 and other federal and local reports. Whereas WIOA sets new performance indicators for the program, CRIS will be undergoing adjustments in programming, so data can be recorded as needed to measure compliance. Currently, the CRIS is not integrated into the system of other core programs or the One–Stop Centers network.

* For the PY 2016 state plan, descriptions of data collection and reporting processes need only include currently known indicators.

2. THE STATE POLICIES THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S STRATEGIES (E.G., CO-ENROLLMENT POLICIES AND UNIVERSAL INTAKE PROCESSES WHERE APPROPRIATE). IN ADDITION, DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING GUIDELINES FOR STATE-ADMINISTERED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO A ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM, INCLUDING BENCHMARKS, AND ITS GUIDANCE TO ASSIST LOCAL BOARDS, CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIALS, AND LOCAL ONE-STOP PARTNERS IN DETERMINING EQUITABLE AND STABLE METHODS OF FUNDING INFRASTRUCTURE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SEC. 121(H)(1)(B). BEGINNING WITH THE STATE PLAN MODIFICATION IN 2018 AND FOR SUBSEQUENT STATE PLANS AND STATE PLAN MODIFICATIONS, THE STATE MUST ALSO INCLUDE SUCH GUIDELINES.

The State Board will review its policies and will issue guidance to comply with the requirements and regulations under WIOA. Guidance has been issued in regards to the designation process for local areas under WIOA (see sections III(b)(3)(A) and VI.I–B(a)(1)(B)), as well as for local board certification and provider selection processes, among other. The State Board advances the process of drafting guidance for the selection of One–Stop Centers' operators in compliance with section 121(d) of WIOA.

The Planning Guidelines is the official document that sets the public policy and requirements for the allocation of local area funding for the Youth, Adult and Dislocated Workers programs (see section VI.I–B(a)(2)(A)). Meanwhile, Financial Guidelines ensure compliance with fund management throughout the system.

In pursuing the State's strategies the State Board might issue or review, as permissible, guidance regarding:

1. Planning processes at the regional and local levels, including support for career pathways and sector strategies at these levels. See section III(a)(1), 101(d)(1), 101(d)(3)(B); and III(a)(2)(A).

2. Revision of monitoring guidance. See sections II(c)(2) and III(a)(2)(A).

3. Compliance with section 675.255 of the proposed rule including Governor's additional indicators of performance to local areas in the State and performance reports guidance to be issued by USDOL and USDOE. See section III(a)(1), 101(d)(3)(F).

4. Standing committees focused on serving youth, low skilled adults, individuals with disabilities and other relevant priorities to be maintained by each local area as part of the local board designation and certification processes. See section III(a)(2)(A).

5. Participation of the VR services program in coordinating bodies and sector strategies to expand opportunities for people with disabilities. See section III(a)(2)(A).

6. Language and requirements supporting sector strategies. See sections II(c)(1) and III(a)(2)(A).

7. Local government sponsorship for sector strategies and career pathways. See sections III(a)(2)(A) and III(a)(2)(C).

8. Engagement of industry–based cluster organizations, local government economic development consortia, industry associations and individual companies through local and regional planning. See section III(a)(2)(A).

9. Adoption of methodologies advanced under TEN 17–15, Att. (11) and ETA's Sector Strategies Implementation Framework in planning processes. See section III(a)(2)(A.

10. Implementation of Title II's career pathways through local plans. See section III(a)(2)(A).

11. Outcomes for regional sector strategies and career pathways. See section III(a)(2)(A).

12. Designation of local boards as 501(c)(3) tax–exempted non–for profits. See section III(a)(2)(A).

13. Funds leveraging by local boards, CEOs, and operators from other program sources (CSBG, CDBG, Ticket to Work and SBA, among other). See section III(a)(2)(B).

14. Criteria to direct statewide set–aside funding to support job–driven strategies. See section III(a)(2)(A).

15. Enforcement of out–of–school youth (OSY) spending. See section III(a)(2)(A).

16. Local area allowance to use up to 10 percent of its adult and dislocated worker funds to provide transitional jobs to individuals, as directed under TEGL 3–15. See section III(a)(2)(C).

17. Local area allowance of up to 20 percent of its adult and dislocated worker funds to provide for the federal share of the cost of providing incumbent worker training. See section III(a)(2)(C).

18. Flexibility afforded to local areas under WIOA to increase the reimbursement level on OJT to up to 75 percent.

19. Procedures along the lines of those recommended by the USDOL's ODEP to ensure the physical and programmatic accessibility of the One–Stop Centers network. See sections II(c)(2), III(a)(2)(A) and III(b)(8).

20. Execution of an agreement infrastructure (MOUs) to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the various partners; establish a common "front–door" approach; integrate registration across programs; provide basic information about other programs at partner offices; adopt referral mechanisms; adopt uniform basic assessment processes across programs; use systematic triage process to assess participants' needs and appropriateness for services; and implement a common sequential flow through service units. See sections III(a)(2)(A) and III(a)(2)(C).

21. Roadmap for the interoperability of information systems, case management applications, back–end data exchange, and changes in current program operations, including intake, co–enrollment, triage processing and performance reporting. See sections II(c)(2) and III(a)(1).

22. Common workforce system identity, branding and messaging, use of Internet portals and social media. See sections II(c)(2), strategies 10.3 and 10.4.

23. Implementation of an online knowledge database to exchange and disseminate cross–program expertise, interpretation, guidance and best practices throughout the system and across programs. See sections strategy and III(a)(1).

24. Operator support for cross training, data validation and collection, and reporting. See section III(a)(2)(A).

25. Core program contributions to sustain the system and to assist Local Boards, chief elected officials, and One–Stop partners in local areas in determining equitable and stable methods of funding the costs of infrastructure at One–Stop Centers. See section III(a)(1).

26. Approach to facilities design. See section III(a)(2)(A).

27. Implementation and outcomes of any authorized waiver. See section VI.I–B(e)(4)(E).

These process will be compliant with section 121(h)(1)(B) of WIOA.

3. STATE PROGRAM AND STATE BOARD OVERVIEW

A. STATE AGENCY ORGANIZATION

Describe the organization and delivery systems at the State and local levels for the programs covered in the plan, including the organizational structure. Include an organizational chart.

State Board

WIOA section 101 requires the establishment of a State Board in order to assist the Governor in the development, implementation and modification of the State Plan as well as the workforce system's public policy on statewide programs. Current State Board is similar to the board required under WIOA regulation, including representatives of business and labor organizations in the state. As allowed under section 101(e)(1) of WIA and in compliance with Section 4(D) of TEGL WIOA 27–14, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico still using the Workforce Investment State Board as WIOA State Board, which has been duly certify that complies with WIOA requirements.

State Program

The WDP created by Act 171–2014 succeeded the Labor Development Administration (LDA) and is responsible for the coordination, supervision and administration of federal funds under Title I and the Trade Adjustment Assistance program. It also provides operational support to the State Board.

The program comprises functional units for Monitoring, Planning, Finance, Statistics, Human Resources and Legal Office.

Local Areas

The local areas were made up of 12 consortia of municipalities and three independent municipalities. The local areas include the Local Mayors Boards, Local Boards and Local One–Stop Operator. Each of the local areas, through the One–Stop comprehensive centers and affiliated sites provide employment and training services under the Adult, Dislocated Workers and Youth and the Employment Service programs. A designation process for local areas under WIOA progresses in accordance with guidance issued in 2015.

Pursuant to WIOA requirements, criteria were issued to govern for the nomination and appointment of members to the Local Boards.

B. STATE BOARD

Provide a description of the State Board, including—

See next Section

1. MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

Provide a membership roster for the State Board, including members' organizational affiliations.

Breakdown State Board membership roster: Name – Position – Sector – Organization a. Raúl Rodríguez Font, CPA:President, State Board:Business:President, Droguería Betances b. Ángel C. Jiménez González :Vice President, State Board; President, Budget and Strategic Planning Committee:Business:President, Fast Lane Franchising, Inc. c. Sandra I. Quiñones López:Secretary, President of Proposal Review Committee:Business:HR Services Consultant d. Enid Monge de Pastrana:President, Small Businesses Committee, Legislation Committee:Business:Owner, Floristería Estrellitas e. Fernando L. Martínez Ortiz:President, Entrepreneurship Committee:Business:Operations Director, Harland Clarke f. Jorge L. Díaz Irizarry:President, Private Sector Liaising Committee:Business:President, Empresas Díaz/Betteroads Asphalt g. Víctor L. Mena Rivera:President, Evaluation, Monitoring and Auditing Committee:Business:Vice President for Administration, Holsum de Puerto Rico h. Edwin Rodríguez Álvarez:Member:Business:President, Asociación de Comercio al Detal i. José A. Algarín Pabón:Member:Business:President, Conglomerado Empresas Santana j. Luz M. Villanueva Díaz:Member:Business:President,Premium Medical Services Card k. Rafael G. Martínez Torres:Member:Business:General Manager Restaurant 1919 and Lobby, Vanderbilt Hotel l. Raymond Ruiz Rivera:Member:Business:Vice President for HR, Encanto Restaurants, Inc. m. Tomás Ramírez Morales:Member:Business:CEO, XJTT Hospitality, Inc. n. Vanessa I. Natal Santiago:Member:Business:Recruiter, St. James Security o. Víctor M. López Rosario:Member:Business:President, Board of Directors PR IT Cluster p. Victoria Cintrón Cruz:Member:Business:President, Light Medical Equipment q. Yamille A. Morales Matos:Member:Business:New Technology and Solutions Sales Director, Microsoft Puerto Rico r. Eduardo Cintrón Suárez:Member:Local Government:Mayor, Municipality of Guayama s. Luis J. Hernández Ortiz, CPA:Member:Local Government:Mayor, Municipality of Villalba t. Wanda J. Soler Rosario:Member:Local Government:Mayor, Municipality of Barceloneta u. José J. Oquendo Cruz:Member:Community–based organization:President and CEO, PECES, Inc. v. Carlos C. Sánchez Ortiz:Member:Labor Union:President, Unión Trabajadores de Muelles w. Angel Matos García:Member:House of Representatives:Representative, Carolina 40 Representative District x. Jesús F. Santa Rodríguez, PE:Member:House of Representatives:Representative, Caguas–Gurabo 31 Representative District y. Angel R. Rosa Rodríguez:Member:Senate:Senator, At–Large z. Luis D. Rivera Filomeno:Member:Senate:Senator, Carolina, Senate District VIII aa. Alberto O. Bacó Bagué:Member:Economic Development Sector:Secretary, PRDEDC bb. Fernando J. Oronoz Rodríguez, Esq.:Member:Governor's Office:Advisor to the Governor, Economic Development cc. Coralie Córdova Rivera:Member:Core Program:Director, WDP dd. Rafael Román Meléndez:Member:Core Program:Secretary, PRDE ee. Vance E. Thomas Rider, Esq.:Member:Core Program:Secretary, PRDOLHR ff. Iván Clemente Delgado, Esq.:Member:Core Program:Administrator, PRVRA gg. Alberto E. Lastra Power, AIA:Member:Required Program:Secretary, PRDOH hh. Idalia Colón Rondón, MTS:Member:Required Program:Secretary, PRDOF ii. Miguelina Torres Román:Member:Required Program:Director, JobCorps Arecibo jj. Luayda Ortiz Orfini:Member:Service Provider:Pathstone, Corp.

2. BOARD ACTIVITIES

Provide a description of the activities that will assist State Board members and staff in carrying out State Board functions effectively.

Please, refer to section III(a)(1), above

4. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS AND ONE-STOP PROGRAM PARTNERS

A. ASSESSMENT OF CORE PROGRAMS

Describe how the core programs will be assessed each year based on State performance accountability measures described in section 116(b) of WIOA. This State assessment must include the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of programs broken down by local area or provider. Such state assessments should take into account local and regional planning goals.

As required under section 677.160 of the proposed rule, the programs will be assessed on the basis of their negotiated levels of performance. Section 116(d)(2) of WIOA requires the State submit a performance report that will contain information on the actual performance levels achieved consistent with the proposed rule 677.175. The State will comply with these requirements and the implementing guidance to be jointly issued by the USDOL and the USDOE, which may include information on reportable individuals as determined by the Secretaries.

Title I

The State will continue to assess the program based on the results of fiscal and programmatic monitoring, and customer satisfaction surveys, and the analysis performance and accountability measures.

Adult Education

Section 212 of WIOA requires a description of how the eligible agency will evaluate annually the effectiveness of the adult education and literacy activities based on the performance measures described in section 116. The evaluation will address the extent to which local providers have implemented each of the thirteen required activities specified in Section 231 and will focus in two key features: a formative evaluation is conducted to assure quality of program management by tracking the effectiveness of program development and implementation; followed by a summative evaluation that documents the educational impact on learners, and determines the extent to which populations specified in the State Plan are served.

The project staff, together with the evaluator, design and formalize the evaluation plan. The evaluation tasks are divided into the following tasks:

• Documenting the project's implementation process

• Periodically aligning program elements with program goals

• Monitoring outcomes and impact

• Following–up on studies of former participants

• Measuring the effectiveness of teacher training

• Assessing the extent to which adult education goals and objectives of displaced workers, and other special populations have been met

The evaluation plan will yield both quantitative and qualitative data, needed to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the program's functions and services. The program evaluator will utilize a combination of strategies, which include but are not limited to: Pre and post inquiries; Surveys; Interviews; Standardized tests; Placement tests; Attendance records; Observations; and Questionnaires.

The product of the evaluation will include:

• Applicable information about the effectiveness of the Section 231 grant program

• Characteristics of the adult learners

• Improvements in literacy levels and educational gains of learners

• Analysis of learner goal attainment

• Outcomes of performance standards

• Services provided

The outcome reports will include the new requirements of the National Reporting System (NRS).

Pursuant to Section 116 of the Adult Education and Literacy Act, each local provider must report student progress measures obtained from all students who have attended at least twelve (12) hours of instruction in programs receiving Section 231 federal supplemental funds. Programs going beyond the required 12 hours, completing up to 120 hours per program level, the evaluation activities will require local providers to:

• Collect and analyze student performance and program improvement data

• Determine performance levels on standard and core indicators

• Identify needs and support services and

• Implement continuous improvement initiatives to meet performance levels for standards and core indicators

Documented progress of student performance measures must include at a minimum:

• Literacy skill level improvements in reading, writing, and speaking the English Language, English language acquisition, problem solving, numeric, and other literacy skills

• Placement in, retention in, or completion of post–secondary education, training, or unsubsidized employment or career advancement

• A secondary school diploma or it's equivalent

• Attainment of student learning goals

All participating local providers will be required to maintain individual student records for all students who have attended 12 hours of instruction. Each record must contain:

• Student identification and Intake information

• Demographic data

• Attendance data

• Assessment data

• Attainment data

• Other relevant information as specified by the data management system

Monitoring of providers

The Puerto Rico Department of Education Adult Education Services continues to promote its comprehensive accountability system to determine program effectiveness and measure the progress of local providers towards continuous improvement. The agency reviews program delivery strategies, processes, and evaluation data in order to support and improve the literacy services provided and to optimize the return of the investment of federal funds in adult education literacy activities.

The Puerto Rico Adult Education Program developed a “local provider self–assessment” to identify promising practices. On a sampling basis the staff, and identified local provider experts, will verify “local provider self–assessment” and monitor the progress of grant programs under Section 231. This includes targeted site visits, offsite monitoring and technical support to local providers, as needed.

The Monitoring processes involve Compliance Monitoring, Regional Monitoring and Fiscal Monitoring. Its purpose is to ensure compliance by Programs, Projects, Regions and Centers in the fiscal and programmatic areas. Such monitoring activities will take place at the start of each school cycle, with the objective of evidencing compliance with the program applicable regulations. The monitoring endeavor will continue throughout the Plan and will include:

• Mid–year Reports. The Puerto Rico Adult Education Program requires all local providers to submit quarterly reports that reflect participation levels for the first three months.

• Annual Program Evaluation. The Program conducts continuous comprehensive program evaluation. This evaluation includes all participating local providers and uses surveys of all local providers, on–site observations and interviews. It provides recommendations for state level planning and development activities for the following year. It will also identify the best practices and emerging needs in conjunction with the training and technical assistance needed for local providers to establish high quality, effective instructional programs to the targeted populations specified in the State Plan.

• Student Follow–up. The Adult Information System's report submitted to the USDOE will reflect the grantee's progress in achieving the objectives in the application of the program and the effect of the program on participants served.

Vocational Rehabilitation

The agency will assess its performance accountability measures, described in section 116(b) of WIOA, through:

• Reports on WIOA indicators based on data gathered through the case management system

• Satisfaction surveys to customers, employers and Community Rehabilitation Programs

• Compliance with strategies established in the VR Portion of the Plan

• Internal programmatic monitoring

In order to collect data for the WIOA performance indicators, PRVRA staff will follow–up on customers and also request data on employment and wages records from other agencies.

B. ASSESSMENT OF ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS

Describe how other one-stop delivery system partner program services and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan will be assessed each year. Such state assessments should take into account local and regional planning goals.

All programs must be evaluated in terms of their compliance with basic threshold requirements, including programmatic and physical accessibility. One–Stop certification guidance will be reviewed to include relevant measures for assessing partner performance. Additionally, as required under WIOA, guidance issued by USDOL, USDOE and other program grantors, and the goals and accountability measures included in regional and local plans.

C. PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Beginning with the state plan modification in 2018 and for subsequent state plans and state plan modifications, provide the results of an assessment of the effectiveness of the core programs and other one-stop partner programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the Unified or Combined State plan during the preceding 2-year period (i.e. the 2-year period of the plan modification cycle). Describe how the State is adapting its strategies based on these assessments.

Not applicable.

D. EVALUATION

Describe how the state will conduct evaluations and research projects on activities under WIOA core programs; how such projects will be coordinated with, and designed in conjunction with, State and local boards and with State agencies responsible for the administration of all respective core programs; and, further, how the projects will be coordinated with the evaluations provided for by the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Education under WIOA.

The State Board will rely on convening resources from local boards, core programs and partner programs to provide input to the State Board on integration and coordination issues, and to carry out research and evaluations across the system as allowed WIOA, participate in any federally–sponsored research initiative.

5. DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

Describe the methods and factors the State will use in distributing funds under the core programs in accordance with the provisions authorizing such distributions.

A. FOR TITLE I PROGRAMS

For Title I programs, provide a description of the written policies that establish the State's methods and factors used to distribute funds to local areas for—

1. YOUTH ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 128(B)(2) OR (B)(3),

The Governor allocates WIOA formula funds allotted for services to youth, adults and dislocated workers in accordance with WIOA sections 128 and 133. Within–State allocations are made in accordance with the allocation formulas contained in WIOA sections 128(b) and 133(b). Of WIOA formula funds allotted for services to youth, adults and dislocated workers, the Governor’s Reserve funds from each of these sources for statewide workforce investment activities. In making these reservations, the Governor reserves up to 15 percent from each of these sources. Funds reserved under this paragraph are combined and spent on statewide employment and training activities, for adults and dislocated workers, and statewide youth activities, without regard to the funding source of the reserved funds. The Governor reserves a portion of the dislocated worker funds for statewide rapid response activities, as described in WIOA. In making this reservation, the Governor reserves up to 25 percent of the dislocated worker funds.

Youth allocation formula.

The Governor elects to distribute funds in accordance with the allocation formula in section 128(b), as follows: • 33\1/3\ percent on the basis of the relative number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in each workforce investment area, compared to the total number of unemployed individuals in all areas of substantial unemployment in the State;

• 33\1/3\ percent on the basis of the relative excess number of unemployed individuals in each workforce investment area, compared to the total excess number of unemployed individuals in the State; and

• 33\1/3\ percent on the basis of the relative number of disadvantaged youth in each workforce investment area, compared to the total number of disadvantaged youth in the State. (WIOA sec. 128(b)).

No local area will receive an allocation that is less than 90% of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the 2 prior years.

2. ADULT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) OR (B)(3),

The Governor elects to distribute funds in accordance with the allocation formula in 133(b), as follows: • 33\1/3\ percent on the basis of the relative number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in each workforce investment area, compared to the total number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in the State;

• 33\1/3\ percent on the basis of the relative excess number of unemployed individuals in each workforce investment area, compared to the total excess number of unemployed individuals in the State; and

• 33\1/3\ percent on the basis of the relative number of disadvantaged adults in each workforce investment area, compared to the total number of disadvantaged adults in the State. (WIOA sec. 133(b))

No local area will receive an allocation that is less than 90% of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the 2 prior years.

3. DISLOCATED WORKER EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) AND BASED ON DATA AND WEIGHTS ASSIGNED.

III.B.5.A.III. DISLOCATED WORKER EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) AND BASED ON DATA AND WEIGHTS ASSIGNED. PUERTO RICO'S RESPONSE IS NOT ADEQUATE BECAUSE THE DISLOCATED WORKER FUNDS DISTRIBUTION DOES NOT INCLUDE THE GOVERNOR'S FORMULA OR INCLUDE THE FORMULA ALLOCATION FOR WEIGHTS IN EACH AREA. From the total funding allocation (100%): 25% will be set aside for Rapid Response, 10% for Statewide Activities and 5% for State Administration. For the remaining 60% of total funding allocation, pursuant to sec. 133(b), the following formulas for distribution of funds to local areas will apply. Of the remaining 60%: • 20% will be allocated based on the number of individuals who receive unemployment insurance by local area; • 20% will be allocated based on the relative number of unemployed individuals; • 20% will be allocated based on the relative number of laid-off individuals; • 15% will be allocated based on the relative number of declining Industries; • 5% will be allocated based on the relative number of Dislocated Farmer/Ranchers; and • 20% will be allocated based on the relative number of long-term unemployed individuals. >

No local area will receive an allocation that is less than 90% of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the 2 prior years.

B. FOR TITLE II:

1. MULTI-YEAR GRANTS OR CONTRACTS

Describe how the eligible agency will award multi-year grants or contracts on a competitive basis to eligible providers in the State, including how eligible agencies will establish that eligible providers are organizations of demonstrated effectiveness.

The Puerto Rico Department of Education-Adult Education Program will award multi-year grants on a competitive basis, every three years, to eligible providers. After the award providers will apply for continuing funds on an annual basis; all providers will be subject to the same funding cycles.

Eligible Providers(Section 203 (5)

The term "eligible provider" means an organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education and literacy activities that may include-

(A) a local educational agency;

(B) a community-based organization or faith-based organization;

(C) a volunteer literacy organization;

(D) an institution of higher education;

(E) a public or private nonprofit agency;

(F) a library;

(G) a public housing authority;

(H) a nonprofit institution that is not described in any of the subparagraphs (A) through (G) and has the ability to provide adult education and literacy activities to eligible individuals;

(I) a consortium or coalition of the agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described in any of subparagrphs (A) through (H); and

(J) a partnership between an employer and an entity described in any subparagraphs (A) through (I).

The PRDE AEP will ensure that all eligible providers have direct and equitable access to apply and compete for grants. The grant competition will be publicized through a variety of print and electronic media throughout the island, letters from the Secretary of Education to all school districts, and regional meetings and other means of available communication. In addition, all providers will be considered for grants based on the same criteria. These criteria are aligned with the directions contained in this Plan and the 13 considerations required by federal legislation.

Thirteen Considerations:

1. The degree to which the eligible provider would be responsive to-

a. Regional needs as identified in the local plan under section 108: and

b. Serving individuals in the community who were identified in such plan as most in need of adult education and literacy activities, including individuals-

i. Who have low levels of literacy skills; or

ii. Who are English language learners;

2. The ability of the eligible provider to serve eligible individuals with disabilities, including eligible individuals with learning disabilities;

3. Past effectiveness of the eligible provider in improving the literacy of eligible individuals, to meet State-adjusted levels of performance for the primary indicators of performance described in section 116, especially with respect to eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy;

4. The extent to which the eligible provider demonstrates alignment between proposed activities and services and the strategy and goals of the local plan under section 108, as well as the activities and services of the one-stop partners;

5. Whether the eligible provider's program-

(A) Is of sufficient intensity and quality, and based on the most rigorous research available so that participants achieve substantial learning gains; and

(B) Uses instructional practices that include the essential components of reading instruction;

6. Whether the eligible provider's activities, including whether reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, and English language acquisition instruction delivered by the eligible provider, are based on the best practices derived from the most rigorous research available and appropriate, including scientifically valid research and effective educational practice;

7. Whether the eligible provider's activities effectively use technology, services, and delivery systems, including distance education in a manner sufficient to increase the amount and quality of learning and how such technology, services, and systems lead to improved performance;

8. Whether the eligible provider's activities provide learning in context, including through integrated education and training, so that an individual acquires the skills needed to transition to and complete postsecondary education and training programs, obtain and advance in employment leading to economic self-sufficiency, and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship;

9. Whether the eligible provider's activities are delivered by well-trained instructors, counselors, and administrators who meet any minimum qualifications established by the State, where applicable, and who have access to high quality professional development, including through electronic means;

10. Whether the eligible provider's activities coordinate with other available education, training, and social service resources in the community, such as by establishing strong links with elementary schools and secondary schools, postsecondary educational institutions, institutions of higher education, local workforce investment boards, one stop centers, job training programs, programs , and social service agencies, business, industry, labor organizations, community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and intermediaries, for the development of career pathways;

11. Whether the eligible provider's activities offer flexible schedules and coordination with Federal, State, and local support services (such as child care, transportation, mental health services, and career planning) that are necessary to enable individuals including individuals with disabilities or other special needs, to attend and complete programs;

12. Whether the eligible provider maintains a high-quality information management system that has the capacity to report measurable participants outcomes (consistent with section 116) and to monitor program performance; and

13. Whether the local areas in which the eligible provider is located have a demonstrated need for additional English language acquisition programs and civics education programs.

In addition to detailing how the applicant intends to fulfill the requirements of the Request for Proposal applicants will provide evidence of their effectiveness in serving adult learners, especially those with barriers. Applicants will submit documentation for the past two years detailing learner's outcomes in the areas of: educational gain; learner's transitions to employment, postsecondary educational and training programs; high school completion; implementations of PRDE Adult Education academic content standards and Integrated Education and training; as well as all other RFP performance, organizational and financial requirements.

The Puerto Rico Department of Education-Adult Education Program will use the following process to distribute funds to awarded applicants:

1. not less than 82.5 percent of this grant's fund to award grants and contracts under Section 231 and to carry out Section 225. Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals, of which not more than 20 percent of such amount shall be available to carry out Section 225,

2. shall use not more than 12.5 percent of the grant funds, to carry out State leadership activities under section 223; and

3. shall use not more than 5 percent of the grant funds, or $85,000, whichever is greater, for administrative expenses of the eligible agency.

Local grants will be distributed based on the ability to meet the requirements of AEFLA purposes outlined in WIOA:

1. Assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and economic self-sufficiency;

2. Assist adults who are parents become a full partner in the education development of their children;

3. Promote transition from adult education to post-secondary education and training through career pathways;

4. Assist immigrants and English language learners improve reading, writing, math, speaking, and comprehending the English language and acquire understanding of American government, individual freedom, and responsibilities of citizenship.

The procedure established by the PRDE's AED Adult Education IEL/CE and Corrections Education is the following:

1. **Notice of availability.** The availability of sub-granting funds is informed through notices published in newspapers, Internet, letters from the Secretary of Education to all school districts, and at regional meetings where applications are distributed and information and technical assistance is provided.

2. **Orientation meeting for potential providers.** The actual orientations to applicants and distribution of applications is held during the month of February and coordinated by PRDE's Adult Education Program staff.

3. **Providers submit proposals.** Providers submit a proposal to the PRDE, where they are received and logged. Proposals must comply with all the requirements in the request for proposals (RFP) form.

4. **Review panel evaluation.** A panel of two reviewers will evaluate those that qualify with expertise in the area of adult education. Proposals are ranked based on the two scores and only those proposals with a score of 70 or above are recommended for funding. Program continuation (3 years) is based on program performance and availability of funds. The programs must provide an operational plan for the second year, must demonstrate they are meeting the performance standards and must have implemented measures of continuous improvement among other requirements.

2. ENSURE DIRECT AND EQUITABLE ACCESS

Describe how the eligible agency will ensure direct and equitable access to all eligible providers to apply and compete for funds and how the eligible agency will ensure that it is using the same grant or contract announcement and application procedure for all eligible providers.

III.B.5.B.II. ENSURE DIRECT AND EQUITABLE ACCESS.

The procedure established by the PRDE for Adult Education,IEL/CE and Corrections Education is the following:

1. Notice of availability. The availability of sub-granting funds is informed through notices published in newspapers, Internet, letters from the Secretary of Education to all school districts, and at regional meetings where applications are distributed and information and technical assistance is provided.

2. Orientation meeting for potential providers. The actual orientations to applicants and the distribution of applications, are held during the month of February and coordinated by PRDE's AEP staff.

3. Providers submit proposals. Providers submit a proposal to the PRDE, where they are received and logged. Proposals must comply with all the requirements in the request for proposals (RFP) form.

4. Review panel evaluation. A panel of two reviewers will evaluate those that qualify with expertise in the area of adult education. Proposals are ranked based on the two scores and only those proposals with a score of 70 or above are recommended for funding. Program continuation (3 years) is based on program performance and availability of funds. The programs must provide an operational plan for the second year, must demonstrate they are meeting the performance standards and must have implemented measures of continuous improvement among other requirements.

A typical schedule for the application process and the allocation of funds is included below:

• February 20XX: Notification of Available Funds and Technical Assistance

• March 20XX: Deadline for Submission of Applications

• May 20XX: Completion of Application Review

• July 20XX: Notification of Awards

C. TITLE IV VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

In the case of a State that, under section 101(a)(2)(A)(i)of the Rehabilitation Act designates a State agency to administer the part of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under which VR services are provided for individuals who are blind, describe the process and the factors used by the State to determine the distribution of funds among the two VR agencies in the State.

Not applicable.

6. PROGRAM DATA

A. DATA ALIGNMENT AND INTEGRATION

Describe the plans of the lead State agencies with responsibility for the administration of the core programs, along with the State Board, to align and integrate available workforce and education data systems for the core programs, unemployment insurance programs, and education through postsecondary education, and to the extent possible, the Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan. The description of the State's plan for integrating data systems should include the State's goals for achieving integration and any progress to date.

1. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PLANS TO MAKE THE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR THE CORE PROGRAMS INTEROPERABLE TO MAXIMIZE THE EFFICIENT EXCHANGE OF COMMON DATA ELEMENTS TO SUPPORT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION.

Please, refer to section II(c)(2), for information on State strategies for the labor market information system.

2. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PLANS TO INTEGRATE DATA SYSTEMS TO FACILITATE STREAMLINED INTAKE AND SERVICE DELIVERY TO TRACK PARTICIPATION ACROSS ALL PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN.

Please, see above.

3. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE BOARD WILL ASSIST THE GOVERNOR IN ALIGNING TECHNOLOGY AND DATA SYSTEMS ACROSS REQUIRED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS (INCLUDING DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMON INTAKE, DATA COLLECTION, ETC.) AND HOW SUCH ALIGNMENT WILL IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY TO INDIVIDUALS, INCLUDING UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS.

Please, refer to section II(c)(2), for information on State strategies for the labor market information system (nd program information systems.

4. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PLANS TO DEVELOP AND PRODUCE THE REPORTS REQUIRED UNDER SECTION 116, PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM. (WIOA SECTION 116(D)(2)).

The core programs will adjust their case management systems in order to collect data for the performance accountability system under WIOA.

Planning Note: States should be aware that Section 116(i)(1) requires the core programs, local boards, and chief elected officials to establish and operate a fiscal and management accountability information system based on guidelines established by the Secretaries of Labor and Education. Separately, the Departments of Labor and Education anticipate working with States to inform future guidance and possible information collection(s) on these accountability systems. States should begin laying the groundwork for these fiscal and management accountability requirements, recognizing that adjustments to meet the elements above may provide opportunity or have impact on such a fiscal and management accountability system.

B. ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPANTS' POST-PROGRAM SUCCESS

Describe how lead State agencies will use the workforce development system to assess the progress of participants who are exiting from core programs in entering, persisting in, and completing postsecondary education, or entering or remaining in employment. States may choose to set additional indicators of performance.

See sections II(b)(4) and III(b)(4), above.

C. USE OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) WAGE RECORD DATA

Explain how the State will meet the requirements to utilize quarterly UI wage records for performance accountability, evaluations, and as a source for workforce and labor market information, consistent with Federal and State law. (This Operational Planning element applies to core programs.)

The wage record information is used to determine employment, retention, and average earnings. Puerto Rico's Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage records are the primary data source. An additional wage record source is the Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS). Since Puerto Rico's UI wage record information requires manual entry, it could not include the most recent data from employers. As such, in the performance accountability system (SIAC), case management notes have been used to determine participants' employment and retention.

However, supplemental data obtained through case management notes are not included on the average earnings measure.

Further, a strategy was developed to include all UI wage information available and allowing the SIAC system to update any previous information. This strategy has been technically challenging; however, we have been able develop a new wage record upload module that will allow to add UI wage record information that was not previously reported. Still, an effort to ensure a more timely data into the wage record system from the employers needs to be developed at the State level.

D. PRIVACY SAFEGUARDS

Describe the privacy safeguards incorporated in the State's workforce development system, including safeguards required by section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g) and other applicable Federal laws.

The State complies with section 444 of the General Education Provision Act, section 2(c)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, section 49l–2(a)(2) of the Wagner Peyser Act, 2 CFR 200.303, OMB Uniform Guidance and any other applicable provision. It also complies with all relevant local provisions, including those identified by the Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics pertaining the access, dissemination and confidentiality of government information. Additional guidance will be issued based on the guide published by the Office of Disability Employment Policy, Promising practices in achieving universal access and equal opportunity: a section 188 reference.

7. PRIORITY OF SERVICE FOR VETERANS

Describe how the State will implement and monitor the priority of service provisions for veterans in accordance with the requirements of the Jobs for Veterans Act, codified at section 4215 of 38 U.S.C., which applies to all employment and training programs funded in whole or in part by the Department of Labor. States should also describe the referral process for veterans determined to have a significant barrier to employment to receive services from the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist.

Enacted in November 7, 2002, the Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002 (PL 107–288) directs to "review and enhance employment, placement and training services offered to veterans." The Act requires that all workforce development programs, fully or partially funded by the USDOL, provide prioritized service to Veterans and, under certain circumstances, to spouses of veterans. Veterans and eligible spouses of veterans who otherwise meet the eligibility requirements for adult programs must receive the highest priority for service delivery.

The PRDOLHR is committed to establish relationships with agencies that make up the One–Stop Centers' network, including municipalities, consortia, colleges and universities, public and private agencies, faith and community–based organizations, employer and labor union representatives to ensure and confirm priority in the delivery of service. The merit staff of the Employment Service will implement and provide priority of service in the One–Stop Centers. The Veteran Program Coordinator (JVSGC) will be responsible to overview the compliance of Priority of Service by members of the workforce system.

A strategic plan will be implemented by the Employment Service's staff with the active participation of DVOPs/LVERs staff members that will coordinate with representatives of all of the organizations engaged through the workforce system in order to review any agreements in place and advance those needed to implement the service mandate. The strategic plan will seek to: identify veterans, veterans with disabilities, returning wounded or injured veterans, REALife–lines participants, transitioning service members and eligible persons; promote employment, training and education for veterans; seek and coordinate support services for veterans; and establish referral and service procedures.

Staff from affected programs bound to provide priority service to veterans will be trained accordingly, including those providing services under the Adults and Displaced Workers program under Title I of WIOA; Wagner–Peyser Act; Trade Act; National Emergency Grants; Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP); National Farmworkers Jobs Program (NFJP); H–IB Technical Skills Training Grants; Job Corps; demonstration projects under WIOA; Youth Opportunity Program; Youth Program under WIOWA; Labor Market Information Formula Grants; Research and Development; those managing electronic tools in the One–Stop Center network and self–directed Internet–based services that use technology to assist individuals in accessing workforce development resources.

Under 20 CFR 1001.120, veteran's priority of service is applied to all employment services including: registration; interview with a veteran's representative; tests; occupational counseling; job search workshops; and OJT referrals. One–Stop Centers inform veterans and eligible spouses of priority of service at initial contact and provide detailed information on the range of employment, placement and training services available to them. If a veteran meets the definition of a Veteran with Significant Barriers to Employment, the veteran or eligible spouse is referred to a JVSG DVOP Specialist for the provision of services.

Also, as directed by the USDOL, veterans aged 18 to 24 years are to be referred to a DVOP specialist for services. Veterans also receive reemployment services from available under a FY2016 Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program. RESEA provides focused case management services, including reemployment orientation, individualized career assessment, and job search assistance.

The Employment Service staff and One–Stop network will continue to publicize and provide priority of service to veterans in accordance with applicable regulations. Veterans entering the One–Stop Centers will be notified of their priority right of service. Once a customer is identified as a veteran, he/she will be provided special information designed for veterans only, and will be referred, when appropriate, to specially trained DVOP specialists to receive intensive services. In order to be referred to a DVOP, the veteran or eligible spouse shall conform to one of the following categories:

• A special disabled or disabled veteran, as those terms are defined in 38U.S.C § 4211(1) and (3)

• Homeless, as defined in Section 103(a) of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11302(a))

• A recently–separated service member, as defined in 38 U.S.C § 4211(6), who at any point in the previous 12 months has been unemployed for 27 or more consecutive weeks

• An offender, as defined by WIOA Section 101(27), who has been released from incarceration within the last 12 months

• Lacking a high school diploma or equivalent certificate

• Low–income individual (as defined by WIOA at Section 101 (25)(B))

For priority of service purpose, the veteran definition covers all persons that served at least one day in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable, as specified in 38 USC 101(2). Eligible spouse has the meaning provided by section 2(a) of the JVA (38 USC 4215(a).

The workforce system network and the general public is aware of the priority of service entitlement to veterans, covered persons and eligible spouses through announcements posted in the bulletin boards and near the entry service delivery point. In addition, the Employment Service and One–Stop Centers staff will be fully trained to identify covered persons at the reception desk and along the workflow.

Verifying priority of service status through the required paperwork is not mandatory unless the covered persons undergo eligibility determination or if the applicable federal program rules require the verification on site. Once priority of service is determined, covered persons move ahead of the line to receive the appropriate employment, training and placement services over the non–covered persons as required by law and as stated by VPL 07–09. Some Unemployment Insurance offices have adopted this priority of service model from the Employment Service although not mandated by law.

Local areas will continue to encourage the provision of additional priority services and information to veterans, including priority access to job orders and individual training accounts (ITAs). Other steps that will ensure priority of service to veterans include: training staff members; periodic reception and

labor exchange staff reinforcement; DVOP/LVER preferential access to job opportunities; placement of signs in waiting areas stating veterans' preference in all offices; a brief orientation (in the morning and afternoons) to clients waiting to be served at the reception area related to the priority to veterans offered; distribution of printed informative material; and data and report validation.

8. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners), will comply with section 188 of WIOA (if applicable) and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) with regard to the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. This also must include a description of compliance through providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. Describe the State's one-stop center certification policy, particularly the accessibility criteria.

III.B.8. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES. PUERTO RICO DID NOT DESCRIBE HOW IT WILL ENSURE THAT THE ONE-STOP SYSTEM WILL ADDRESS THE ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

The Commonwealth strives to continually improve its policies regarding physical and programmatic accessibility standards to serve the persons with disabilities and those who confront barriers to access the services provided by the government or join public service. Among other measures, Executive Order OE-2000-09 mandates that all publicly owned or leased facilities must be fully accessible; Act 229-2003 directs public agencies to implement accessibility standards in all public websites; Executive Order OE 2008-57 requires all public entities to implement a non-discrimination policy on public employment and services including any category based on race, color, gender, gender identity, real or perceived sexual orientation, pregnancy condition, birth, age, origin or social condition, marital status, political or religious beliefs, HIV/AIDS status, veteran condition, or being perceived as a victim of domestic or sexual violence; and, Act 22-2013 furthers the non discrimination policies through the merit principle in public personnel selection and transactions. Moreover, Act 158-2015 restructured the Office of the Advocate of the Persons with Disabilities to heighten its advocacy faculties, including monitoring the implementation of public employment set-asides for persons with disabilities mandated by Act 219-2006.

The Commonwealth's policies are consistent down to the level of Local Board governance structure. Circular Letter WIOA-2-2015 requires the appointment of a standing committee to provide information and assist the board with operational and other issues relating to the provision of services to individuals with disabilities. Those might include issues relating to compliance with section 188 and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, regarding the provision of programmatic and physical access to the services, programs, and activities of the One-Stop Delivery System, as well as appropriate training for staff on providing support for or accommodation to, and finding employment opportunities for, individuals with disabilities.

The Commonwealth is one of 26 jurisdictions yet to benefit from the implementation of the DOL's Disability Employment Initiative. As enunciated in the State Plan it will seek to join in the DOL's initiative in order to expand the capacity of the workforce system to increase the number of individuals with disabilities participating in existing career pathways and programs.

As required by section 121(g) and proposed rule 361.800 requiring the certification and continuous improvement of the One-Stop Centers, the State Board adopted criteria and procedures to assess the physical and programmatic accessibility in accordance with sec. 188 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. According to section 107(d)(6) of WIOA, Local Boards shall lead efforts in the local area to identify and promote proven and promising strategies and initiatives for meeting the

needs of employers, and workers and jobseekers (including individuals with barriers to employment) in the local workforce development system, including providing physical and programmatic accessibility. Moreover, they remain accountable to assess, on an annual basis, the physical and programmatic accessibility of all One-Stop Centers in their local area. The assessment of partner programs participating in the One-Stop Delivery System must also evaluate their compliance with basic threshold requirements, including programmatic and physical accessibility of their services and facilities.

As established in the State Plan, Title I and the PRVRA will lead a comprehensive effort to adapt the recommendations of the USDOL's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) contained in its "Promising Practices in Achieving Universal Access and Equal Opportunity: a Section 188 Disability Reference Guide". All local areas will be required to implement the resulting guidance adopted by the State Board as part of the local area certification and the operator's competitive selection processes. Also, ODEP's recommendations in regards to expanding the participation of people with disabilities in the workforce by means of the Registered Apprenticeship program will be furthered through the SAA's implementing regulations. Presently, the State Board's monitoring guidance includes the following criteria for testing physical and programmatic accessibility of the One-Stop Centers:

• One-Stop Centers shall facilitate the availability and ease of access of both self-serviced and assisted methods, including computer for resume preparation, Internet to search for job opportunities, telephone to contact employers, fax for sending resumes to employers with job opportunities, printed and digital information on employment and career opportunities, and printed and digital information on financial assistance for studies. Compliance will be assessed through inspections of the self-service system, and the procedures adopted.

• The physical installations of the One-Stop Centers must meet the requirements of the American with Act of 1990 and ensuing regulations, as required by section 121(g) of WIOA. As a minimum, each facility must ensure it has: compliant accessible routes; site, plumbing, communication and space elements compliant with applicable specifications; unobstructed and sufficient means of egress; appropriate signage and emergency signage for exit routes; evacuation plan posted in visible areas; and, properly certified fire extinguishers and fire prevention systems, among other requirements. Compliance will be assessed through operational procedures and visual inspection of the facilities.

• Whenever required, the One-Stop Centers shall provide auxiliary aids and services to afford individuals with disabilities the opportunity to participate and enjoy the benefits of Title I, and the primary consideration for the provision of such aids and services shall be the request from persons with disabilities. Compliance will be assessed through procedures or methods adopted and visual inspection of auxiliary aids and services available.

• Whenever the One-Center communicates by phone with beneficiaries, registered individuals, eligible applicants or registered individuals, participants, job applicants, businesses or employers, telecommunication mechanisms for individuals with hearing impaired (TDD/TTY) must be used or, alternatively, systems of communication that are equally effective. Compliance will be assessed through the procedures or methods adopted and visual inspection of the auxiliary aids and services available.

• The One-Stop Centers must ensure that interested individuals, including individuals with visual or hearing impairments obtain information on the availability and location of accessible services,

activities and facilities. Compliance will be assessed through the procedures or methods adopted, training schedules for the staff in charge of customer service, and the appointment of staff to assist customers with visual and/or hearing impairment.

• The One-Stop Centers shall institute a process to readily identify the partner that will address the needs of a customer with disabilities and, if necessary, complete a referral to a partner program. Compliance will be assessed through the operational procedures adopted for completing customer profiles and initial service forms, and questionnaires on services.

• The One-Stop Centers must exhibit in a visible and prominent location, in both English and Spanish languages, the following posters: "Equal Employment Opportunity is the Law", including rights protected veterans; "Notice" of the Worker Protection Act; "Notice" of the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act; "Employee Rights Act under the Fair Labor Standards"; and, "Executive Order 11246/29 U.S.C. 1801 / Fair Labor Standards / 20 CFR Part 1010". Compliance will be assessed through visual inspection.

• The One-Stop Centers must implement the provisions of the Jobs for Veterans Act, which afford priority of service to veterans and eligible persons. Compliance will be assessed through visual inspection of materials or communications provided to the public, inspection of the Local Area website, if applicable and the procedure adopted to provide priority of service to veterans, including to facilitate identifying the veteran or covered person from the moment he/she enters the One-Stop Center.

The One-Stop Centers' staff will be fully aware of non-discrimination and physical and programmatic accessibility mandates. The direct customer service staff will also be trained to follow intake procedures to ensure that adequate, voluntary and confidential information on a customer's disability is collected and recorded and to manage the corresponding service protocol. Memorandums of Understanding will be advanced in order to delineate the roles of the operators, partner programs, and other programs that might be able to provide assistance, aids or services to persons with disabilities. Act 136 of 1996 requires that all government agencies provide an interpreter to assist persons with hearing impairments that prevent oral communication and limit their access to services, using the services of the Sign Language Communication training program offered by the Continued Education Program of Office of the Commonwealth's Training and Labor Affairs Advisory and Human Resources Administration Office. At a basic level, cross-training on sign language will be readily facilitated by the PRVRA to One-Stop Centers' staff in charge of customer service to aid in the referral to the PRVRA of hearing impaired customers that might appear to be eligible and in need of PRVRA services.

9. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners) will ensure that each one-stop center is able to meet the needs of English language learners, such as through established procedures, staff training, resources, and other materials.

III.B.9. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS. PUERTO RICO DID NOT DESCRIBE HOW IT WILL ENSURE THAT EACH ONE-STOP CENTER IS ABLE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS OR THOSE FOR WHOM NEITHER ENGLISH NOR SPANISH IS THE DOMINANT LANGUAGE.

The One-Stop Delivery System provides services on a bilingual basis, with all materials and communications available both in English and Spanish languages. The Commonwealth's One-Stop Delivery System will continue to excel in providing universal access to its customers. As highlighted by DOL's Guidance on Limited English Proficiency, "the fact that English as Second Language (ESL) classes are made available does not obviate the statutory and regulatory requirement to provide meaningful access for those who are not yet English proficient".

According to ACS 2014 data, in 99.8% of the households in Puerto Rico, the language spoken was either English or Spanish. Out of 1,241,454 households, 330 spoke other non-Spanish indo-european languages and were identified as limited English speaking households; 208, other Asian and Pacific Island languages; and 108, other languages. There are no data available to identify the use of Spanish as second language, rather than English, for the 644 estimated households identified as having limited English-speaking capacity. When looked at data by language spoken at home, out of the total estimated population of 3,433,930 (over 5 years old), 3,428,686 spoke either English or Spanish at home. Out of the remaining 5,244 who spoke other language at home, 1,698 (0.05% of total population above 5 years old) were identified as speaking English "less than well". Among these, 365 spoke non-Spanish indo-european languages, 1,098 other Asian and Pacific Island languages, and 235 other languages. Chinese language speakers were the largest group, followed by French and French Creole speakers, and Arabic speakers. Again, there are no data available to project the number of those that, while not able to speak English at a level well or above, might speak Spanish well or above and, therefore, confront no barrier to access the bilingual One-Stop Delivery System.

While it might prove to be impractical to expand the availability of materials in languages other than English and Spanish, language translation and interpretation assistance will be provided on a case-by-case and request basis in order to adequately serve the needs of those customers and businesses requiring services that neither speak English nor Spanish. In so doing, DOL's Guidance on LEP, as published in 68 FR 32291, and DOE's OCR Guidance will be complied with to balance the factors in determining what steps might be both necessary and reasonable to meet the particularized language needs of those seeking services or information. Regarding contracted interpretation services, those will be provided up to the standard of timeliness, at a time and place that avoids the effective denial or the imposition of an undue burden on or delay in important rights, benefits, or services to the customer. The Translation Center of the UPR's Graduate Translation Program could be engaged to provide, whenever required, translation of written materials including: applications, assessments, consent and complaint forms, list of partners, services and providers available through the One-Stop Centers network, and program communications with participants.

The Commonwealth will ensure One-Stop staff is aware of the LEP policies. The needs posed by LEP customers and businesses will be assessed through an accurate recording of the frequency, nature and importance of encounters with LEP groups.

IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS

Describe the methods used for joint planning and coordination among the core programs, and with the required one-stop partner programs and other programs and activities included in the Unified or Combined State Plan.

The State Board maintains a Strategic Planning Committee that will implement, oversee and review, as appropriate, the Unified State Plan. It will also steer and align with the State Plan, the local and regional planning processes, through appropriate guidance, pursuant to sections 106 and 108 of WIOA. The State Board will be assisted by the Planning Division of the WDP and the core and required program teams assembled to prepare and submit the Unified State Plan.

V. COMMON ASSURANCES (FOR ALL CORE PROGRAMS)

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include assurances that—

1. The State has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a State Board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts; Yes

2. The State has established a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of State boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes; Yes

3. The lead State agencies with optimal policy-making authority and responsibility for the administration of core programs reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational planning elements of the Unified or Combined State Plan, and approved the elements as serving the needs of the populations served by such programs; Yes

4. (a) The State obtained input into the development of the Unified or Combined State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administrating the core programs, required one-stop partners and the other Combined Plan programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, including other organizations that provide services to individuals with barriers to employment, and the general public, and that the Unified or Combined State Plan is available and accessible to the general public; (b) The State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a member of the State Board; Yes

5. The State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities; Yes

6. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3); Yes

7. The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable; Yes

8. The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program; Yes

9. The State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State board) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs; Yes

10. The State has a One-Stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all One-Stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA); Yes

11. Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and Yes

12. Priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is provided in accordance with 38 USC 4215 in all workforce preparation, development or delivery of programs or services funded directly, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor. Yes

VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

The State must address all program-specific requirements in this section for the WIOA core programs regardless of whether the State submits either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE I-B

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following with respect to activities carried out under subtitle B--

A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

1. REGIONS AND LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

A. IDENTIFY THE REGIONS AND THE LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS DESIGNATED IN THE STATE.

The Governor has identified five regions of economic development in the Island, according to their predominant economic activities. These five functional regions contain similar socio–economic characteristics and shared dependencies, which allows for them to be defined as regions of economic development. These will be the regions to be promoted in delineating local areas and guiding regional planning, pending consultation with the local areas to be designated and the corresponding Chief Elected Officials, pursuant to section 106(a)(1) of WIOA. These regions are:

• Northwest. The region is characterized by an industrial clustering in computer and information devices, aerospace, agriculture and retail trade.

• Southwest. The region is characterized by the concentration of industries in the sectors of agriculture, eco–tourism, hospitality, logistics technology and retail trade.

• North Central. The region is characterized by an industrial clustering in pharmaceutical manufacturing, biotechnology, logistics technology, health services, research and development, medical tourism and retail trade.

• Eastern. The region is characterized by the concentration of industries in tourism, logistics technology and retail sales.

• Southeast. The region is characterized by the concentration of industries in pharmaceutical manufacturing, agricultural biotechnology including crop research and development, and retail trade.

As required under section 106(a)(2) of WIOA, all would–be local areas undergoing the designation process will integrate the proposed regions. All regions, as detailed below, will comprise more than one local area. During the next two years, prior to the plan's review, the transition of the 15 local areas into 5 local areas corresponding to each of the proposed regional areas will be encouraged.

All regions, as detailed in the table below, will comprise more than one of the current local areas. 1) Northwest –Mayagüez–Las Marías, Northwest, North Central 2) Southwest – Southwest, Ponce 3) North Central – Manatí–Dorado, Bayamón–Comerío, Guaynabo–Toa Baja, San Juan, La Montaña 4) Eastern – Carolina, Northeast 5) Southeast – South Central, Caguas–Guayama, Southeast

The Governor and the State Board shall establish public policy and guidelines to enable local areas develop regional plans. These will be presented to the State Board for evaluation and approval. The guidelines will consider the following topics, consistent with the objectives established in WIOA regulations:

• Technical assistance to local areas for carrying out the regional planning and service delivery efforts required under section 106(c)

• Alignment with regional economic development strategies adopted by the State

• Integration of the economic development initiatives of local government consortia

• Integration of industry cluster organizations, and the advancement of sector strategies and initiatives

• Development of projects and activities for existing and emerging industries generating jobs opportunities

• Collaboration with business and industry associations available in the region

• Agreement structure (MOUs) with consortia, clusters, business associations, academia, providers and other stakeholders in the workforce development systems

• Conditions for strategic planning including evaluation of strength, weaknesses, and opportunities in the region, terms for the revision of the plan, among other parameters

• Governance of the regional plan, in collaboration with the boards of mayors and participating local boards

• Integration of the local boards in the service–delivery model mandated by WIOA, including common intake, common outreach strategies and initiatives, universal service across the region, common performance measures (optional), identification of additional grants and fund opportunities, cost allocation plan, and MOU structure with required and optional partners, among other factors

B. DESCRIBE THE PROCESS USED FOR DESIGNATING LOCAL AREAS, INCLUDING PROCEDURES FOR DETERMINING WHETHER THE LOCAL AREA MET THE CRITERIA FOR “PERFORMED SUCCESSFULLY” AND “SUSTAINED FISCAL INTEGRITY” IN ACCORDANCE WITH 106(B)(2) AND (3) OF WIOA. DESCRIBE THE PROCESS USED FOR IDENTIFYING REGIONS AND PLANNING REGIONS UNDER SECTION 106(A) OF WIOA. THIS MUST INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE STATE CONSULTED WITH THE LOCAL BOARDS AND CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIALS IN IDENTIFYING THE REGIONS.

VI.I-B(A)(1)(B) DESCRIBE THE PROCESS USED FOR DESIGNATING LOCAL AREAS INCLUDING PROCEDURES FOR DETERMINING WHETHER THE LOCAL AREA MET THE CRITERIA FOR PERFORMED SUCCESSFULLY AND SUSTAINED FINANCIAL INTEGRITY IN ACCORDANCE WITH AND (3) OF WIOA. DESCRIBE THE PROCESS USED FOR IDENTIFYING REGIONS AND PLANNING REGIONS UNDER 106(A) OF WIOA. THIS MUST INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE STATE CONSULTED WITH THE LOCAL BOARDS AND CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIAL IN IDENTIFYING THE REGIONS. PUERTO RICO’S PROCESS USED FOR DESIGNATING LOCAL AREAS DOES NOT INCLUDE PROCEDURES FOR DETERMINING WHETHER THE LOCAL AREA MET THE REQUIREMENT FOR ’PERFORMED SUCCESSFULLY" AND "SUSTAINED FINANCIAL INTEGRITY" IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTIONS AND (3) OF WIOA. PUERTO RICO’S PROCESS USED FOR IDENTIFYING REGIONS AND PLANNING REGIONS IS NOT IN COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 106(A) OF WIOA.

In 2015, the Commonwealth began the process of informing local boards and elected officials of the requirements to designate local areas under WIOA. In December 2015, guidance was provided to local elected officials as a reminder of their responsibility to further the designation of the local

workforce development areas. Circular Letter WIOA-1-2015 was issued by the State Board on December 4, 2015. The policy outlined the process of designation of the local areas, including the criteria and procedures to request an initial local area designation and subsequent designation.

As required under WIOA, the State policy for the designation of local areas requires: • Consultation with the State Board • Consultation with the chief elected officials and Local Boards • Consideration of comments received through a public comment process that affords an opportunity for comments regarding the designation of regions and local areas by representatives of Local Boards, chief elected officials, businesses, IHEs, labor organizations, other primary stakeholders, and the general public Circular Letter WIOA-1-2015, specified the procedures for the automatic initial designation of local areas that were formerly designated under WIA and wanted to continue designated under, pursuant to section 106(b)(2), provided the area remained geographically the same, "performed successfully" and complied with the criteria for "sustained fiscal integrity" during the two-year period immediately preceding WIOA.

The Letter defines the term "Performed Successfully" to mean: that a local area met or exceeded the adjusted levels of performance for primary indicators of performance negotiated between the Governor, the Local Area and the elected officials, described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA; or, as applicable, the core indicators of performance described in section 136(b)(2)(A) of WIA for each of the last two (2) consecutive years for which data were available preceding the determination of performance. As directed by TEGL 25-13, the term "met" describes that the actual performance achieved against an individual performance measure fell in the range of 80 to 100 percent of the negotiated level of performance for the measure and the term "exceeds" describes when the level of performance was above 100% of the negotiated performance level.

The Letter also defined the term "Sustained Fiscal Integrity" to mean: that the DOL’s Secretary has not made a formal determination, during either of the last 2 consecutive years preceding the determination regarding such integrity, that either the grant recipient or the administrative entity of the local area misexpended funds provided under subtitle B (or, if applicable, title I of WIA as in effect prior to the effective date of such subtitle B), due to willful disregard of the requirements of the provision involved, gross negligence, or failure to comply with accepted standards of administration; or, the Governor has not made a formal determination regarding non-compliance with the administrative requirements established under 2 CFR 200, through single audit, auditing or monitoring reports issued by the WDP, as evidenced in the annual financial review, and in relation to the following criteria: • Adequate reporting of fixed expenses, accumulated expenses, encumbrances, stand-in costs, program or interest income, as allowable and supported by appropriate documentation. • Cost allocation methods used by the Local Board comply with the requirements established by both the Federal and State OMB, and costs are adequately and equitably allocated to their respective cost objectives. • Allocations are supported by sufficient and properly maintained documentation. • Consistency regarding budget planning and control to ensure that funds and expenses are properly tracked and assessed under the approved budget. • Adequate and reliable financial controls are in effect. Circular Letter WIOA-1-2015 also specified the procedures for the initial designation of local areas pursuant to section 106(b)(4). The Governor may approve a request from any municipality (including a combination of such units) for designation of an area as a local area if the State Board determines that considerations under 106(b)(1)(B) are met, including the extent to which the units comply with the following criteria: • Local areas are consistent with a labor market area. • Local areas share a regional economic development area. • Local areas have available the Federal and non-Federal resources necessary to effectively administer activities, including whether the areas have the appropriate education and training providers, such as institutions of higher education and area career and technical education schools.

The designation process for a local area seeking initial automatic designation required evidence be provided to demonstrate that the negotiated performance levels were met for PY 2012 and 2013 for common measures, using attachment II of the Request Form provided. Units were also required to provide a certification asserting that sustained fiscal integrity was achieved for PY 2012 and 2013, which required further validation by the WDP's Audit and Monitoring Division. Data regarding performance levels achieved in PY2012 and 2013, for the last two (2) full program years before WIOA went into effect, were made available to the Local boards. Only two (2) out of the fifteen (15) local areas designated under WIOA were designated under the automatic procedure, after meeting the thresholds. These were Mayaguez-Las Marías and Sureste. The remaining thirteen (13) local areas requested to be designated under the discretionary process. Eleven (11) of these kept their previous delimitations, and two (2) were modified.

As recommended by TEGL 27-14, the Commonwealth undertook the identification of regions concurrently with the designation of local areas. Circular Letter WIOA-1-2015 notified the local boards and CEOs that regions were to be identified in consultation with the Local Areas and chief elected officials in the local area(s); and to be submitted for public consultation concurrently with the proposed designation of local areas. The policy also advance the following considerations for the identification of regions: • Local areas share a single labor market. • Local areas share a common economic development area. • Local areas possess the Federal and non-Federal resources, including appropriate education and training institutions, to administer activities under WIOA.

Other criteria included some of the factors recommended in the Proposed Rule. These were: • Population centers • Commuting patterns • Industrial composition • Labor force conditions • Geographic boundaries

Section 679.210 of the Proposed Rule directed the Governor to assign local areas to a region before the submission of the State Unified Plan. Since the delimitation of the local areas were a prerequisite in order to identify the configuration of the regions, the identification of regions did not advance prior to February 5, 2016, the extended deadline provided to the units for submitting their requests for local area designations. The process of designating the areas and identifying the regions required consulting the State Board, Local Boards and the general public, before being considered for designation by the Governor. The designation went into effect on June 3, 2016.

Having assessed, after initial submission by the units, that Local Areas were to remain substantially unmodified (with minor changes requested in the delimitation of two of the previously designated areas), the requested delimitations were advanced as local areas for the purpose of the discussion under the proposed State Plan. In the analysis for the identification of the proposed regions that ensued, the WDP, in coordination with the State Board and the Office of the Governor went on to consider the criteria enunciated under the Circular Letter WIOA-1-2015.

A general definition for a labor market area is an economically integrated area within which individuals can reside and find employment within a reasonable distance or can readily change jobs without changing their place of residence. LMAs include both the metropolitan and micropolitan areas defined by the Federal OMB and the small labor market areas maintained by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The DOL listed fifteen (15) LMAs for Puerto Rico in 2015; seven (7) of these comprising one municipality each. Due to proximity factors, the distribution favored the integrity of Local Areas over that of the LMAs. The 15 proposed Local Areas were mapped to five (5) resulting planning regions. The consistency of economic development regions was the decisive factor in determining the configuration of the proposed regions. Foremost attention was afforded to the presence of industrial clustering patterns, that were already supported by governance structures and

regional partnerships formed between consortia of local governments, industries, employers and educational institutions.

All of the resulting proposed regions are also planning regions under WIOA, comprising more than one requested Local Area. The proposed regions: had adequate infrastructure and facilities to administer activities under WIOA, including IHEs; were integrated by more than one population center and at least one urbanized area (population over 50,000); were supported by a primary highway infrastructure that facilitated traversing the region and LMAs, and provided adequate access to contiguous regions and LMAs; were in alignment with regional industrial concentration patterns, as identified by the PRPB; contained at least one regional consortia supporting industry clusters and regional strategies; and maintained the territorial integrity of the local areas.

The proposed regional structure was readily incorporated into the draft of the State Plan and made available for public consultation, affording representatives of Local Boards, chief elected officials and the general public the opportunity to provide input on the proposed designation of local areas and identification of regions, before its final submission. Public consultation, prior the submission of the Commonwealth's plan, was deemed to exceed the requirements of consultation, as defined in 675.300. As a result of the consultation process, no changes were introduced in the proposed delimitation of local areas and regions. Notwithstanding, as part of the regional planning process the Commonwealth intends to continue consultations regarding the identification of regions and so commits to continue the evaluation and, if required, modification of regions, in order to meet the requirements of the bi-annual State Plan review.

TABLE VI-1. SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF LOCAL AREAS AND REGIONS

Source: ACS 2014, 1-year estimates; WDP, PRDOLHR, PRDE, PRVRA.

Note: Sur Central's local area name is going to be changed to "Agencia Municipal para el Desarrollo Economico" from PY2016 onwards.

Abbreviations: Reg., Proposed Region; E, Eastern; NC, North Central; NW, Northwest; SE, Southeast; SW, Southwest; Affl., One-Stop affiliated site; Compr., One-Stop Comprehensive Center; ABE1 to 4, Adult Basic Education levels 1 to 4; ASEA 1 to 2, Adult Secondary Education levels 1 or 2; ESL, English as Second Language program; Night, Night-time classes; Sat., Classes on Saturday; CAA, PRVRA's Center of Assessment and Adjustment. Note: Wagner Peyser's current Local Offices are in the process of co-locating at One-Stop Comprehensive Centers.

Local Area: BAYAMÓN-COMERÍO

Municipalities Bayamón; Comerío

Est. Pop.: 201,273; 20,533

Reg.;NC; NC

Labor Market Area: San Juan MSA; San Juan MSA

Regional Consortia Affiliation: NA;

One-Stop Facs.: Compr.; Affl.

WP Facs.; Local Office;

Title II Facilities: Adult Academy (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2); Francisco Gaztambide Sch. (ASE1 ASE2 Night); Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL Night); Francisco Oller Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL); Francisco Rivera Claudio Sch. (ASE1 ASE2 ESL); Rubén Rodríguez Sch. (ASE1 ASE2); Pablo D. Burgos Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL EEES;) UMET (EEES Night); Alt. Ed. Accelerated Sch. (ASE1 ASE2); Bayamón Central Univ. (ESL Night); Municipality of Comerío (Night); Francisco Gaztambide Sch. (ASE1 ASE2)

Local Area: CAGUAS-GUAYAMA

Municipalities: Aguas Buenas; Aibonito; Arroyo; Caguas; Cayey; Guayama; Gurabo; Trujillo Alto

Estimated Population: 28,083; 25,241; 19,255; 140,166 47,252; 44,261; 46,460; 73,030

Proposed Region: SE

Labor Market Area: San Juan MSA; San Juan MSA; Guayama MSA; San Juan MSA; San Juan MSA; Guayama MSA; San Juan MSA; San Juan MSA

Regional Consortia Affiliation: DISUR INTECO INTENE;

One-Stop Facs.: Affl. ; Compr. ; Compr. ; Compr. ; Compr. ; Compr. ; Affl. ; Compr. ;

WP Facs.; Local Offices Local Office

Title II Facilities: Luis Muñoz Marín Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL Night) ; Bonifacio Sánchez Jiménez Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL Night) ; Ana G. Méndez Univ. Virtual Campus (ESL) ; Pablo Colón Berdecía Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL) ; Educational Services Center (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2) ; Milagros de Amor Corp. (ESL Night) ; Municipality of Caguas (ESL EEES Civics) ; Miguel Meléndez Muñoz Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2) ; Carlos Colón Burgos Sch. (ABE3 ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL) ; Rafael López Landrón (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL EEES) Alternative Educational Services (Civics) Dra. Conchita Cuevas Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2) Turabo University (ESL) Eloisa Pascual Sch. (ABE3 ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL) Turabo University (ESL) Ana Jacoba Candelas Sch. (ABE4 ASE 1 ASE2 ESL Night) Petra Zenón de Fabery Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 Sat.) UMET (ESL)

VRA Facs: Sat. Office Region. Office

Local Area: CAROLINA

Municipalities: Carolina

Estimated Population: 171,310

Proposed Region: East

Labor Market Area: San Juan MSA

Regional Consortia Affiliation: INTENE

One-Stop Facs.: Compr./Affl.

WP Facs.; One-Stop

Title II Facilities: Carlos F. Daniels Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL); Dr. José M. Lázaro Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2); Municipality of Carolina (ABE1 ESL);

VRA Facs: Sat. Office

Local Area: GUAYNABO-TOA BAJA

Municipalities: Cataño; Guaynabo; Toa Alta; Toa Baja;

Estimated Population: 27,211; 95,428; 74,688; 86,873

Proposed Region: North Central

Labor Market Area: San Juan MSA

Regional Consortia Affiliation: INTENOR

One-Stop Facs.: 3 Affl. 1 Compr.

WP Facs.;

Title II Facilities: Francisco Oller Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL Night) ; Pedro Albizu Campos Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL Night)

VRA Facs: CAA-Hearing Imp.; CAA

Local Area: LA MONTAÑA

Municipalities: Barranquitas; Cidra; Corozal; Naranjito; Orocovis;

Estimated Population: 30,045; 42,878; 36,463; 30,034; 22,927

Proposed Region: Norte Central

Labor Market Area: San Juan MSA

Regional Consortia Affiliation: INTENOR

One-Stop Facs.: 1 Compr. ; 5 Affl.

WP Facs.;

Title II Facilities: Pablo Colón Berdecía Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 Night) ; Ana Jacoba Candelas Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL Night) ; Pablo D. Burgos Marrero Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL EEES) ; Rubén Rodriguez Sch. (ASE1 ASE2) ; Urban H. Sch. (ASE1 ASE2) ; Youth Service Center (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL) ; Universidad del Este (ESL Sat.)

VRA Facs: 3 Sat. Offices

Local Area: MANATÍ-DORADO

Municipalities: Barceloneta; Ciales; Dorado; Florida; Manatí; Morovis; Vega Alta ; Vega Baja;

Estimated Population: 24,908; 18,242; 38,305; 12,565 42,900; 32,484; 39,670; 57,915

Proposed Region: North Central

Labor Market Area: San Juan MSA

Regional Consortia Affiliation: INTENOR

One-Stop Facs.: 8 Affl. ; 1 Compr.

WP Facs.;

Title II Facilities: Universidad del Este (ESL Sat.) ; Héctor M. Ruiz H.Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL Night;) José Santos Alegría Sch. (ASE1 ASE2 Night) ; Alternative Sch. (ASE1 ASE2) ; Francisco Rivera Claudio Sch. (ASE1 ASE2 ESL Night) ; Apolo San Antonio Sch. (ASE1 ASE2 ESL) ; Ángel Sandín Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 Night) ;

VRA Facs: 2 Sat. Office

Local Area: MAYAGÜEZ-LAS MARÍAS

Municipalities: Las Marías; Mayaguez

Estimated Population: 9,521; 85,425

Proposed Region: Northwest NW

Labor Market Area: Las Marías Municipio; Mayaguez MSA

Regional Consortia Affiliation: PRTEC

One-Stop Facs.: 1 Affl. ; 1 Compr.

WP Facs.; 1 Local Office

Title II Facilities: Eugenio María de Hostos Academy (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 Night) ; José Gautier Benítez Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 Night) ; Municipality of Mayagüez (ESL EEES Civics)

VRA Facs: Region. Office; 1 Sat. Office

Local Area: NORESTE

Municipalities: Canóvanas; Ceiba; Culebra; Fajardo; Loíza; Luquillo; Naguabo; Río Grande; Vieques

Estimated Population: 47,655; 13,122; 1,585; 35,539; 29,054; 19,731; 26,881; 53,628; 9,217

Proposed Region: East

Labor Market Area: San Juan MSA; Vieques Municipio; Culebra Municipio;

Regional Consortia Affiliation: INTENE; INTECO

One-Stop Facs.: 9 Affl. ; 1 Compr.

WP Facs.; 1 Local Office

Title II Facilities: Agustín Mercado Reverón Vocational Sch. (ASE1 ASE2) ; Santiago iglesias Pantin Sch. (ABE1 ASE1 ASE2 Night) ; Jesusa Vizcarrondo Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 Night) ; Isidro Sánchez Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 Night) ; Municipality of Naguabo (ESL) ; Juan J. Maunez Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 Night) ; Municipality of Rio Grande (ABE1 ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL) ;

Local Area: NOROESTE

Municipalities: Aguada; Aguadilla; Añasco; Isabela; Moca; Rincón;

Estimated Population: 41,176; 59,068; 28,874; 44,965; 39,349; 14,998;

Proposed Region: Northwest

Labor Market Area: Aguadilla-Isabela MSA

Regional Consortia Affiliation: PRTEC

One-Stop Facs.: 1 Compr.

WP Facs.; 1 Local Office

Title II Facilities: Arsenio Martínez Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL Night) ; UMET (ESL Night) ; C.E.M.I. (ASE1 ASE2 ESL); Francisco Mendoza Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL Night) ; Dr. Efraín Sanchez Hidalgo Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL Night) ; Manuel Garcia Pérez Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 Night) ; Narciso Rabell Cabrero Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 Night)

VRA Facs:

Local Area: NORTE CENTRAL

Municipalities: Adjuntas; Arecibo; Camuy; Hatillo; Jayuya; Lares; Quebradillas; Utuado

Estimated Population: 19,188; 93,969; 34,438; 41,830; 16,183; 29,426; 25,512; 32,086

Proposed Region: Northwest

Labor Market Area: Adjuntas Micro; Arecibo MSA; Jayuya Micro; Aguadilla-Isabela MSA

Regional Consortia Affiliation: DISUR; INTENOR; DISUR; PRTEC

One-Stop Facs.: 1 Compr.

WP Facs.; 1 Local Office

Title II Facilities: Elba Lugo Carrión Sch. (ASE1 ASE2 ESL Night) ; Federico Degetau Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL) ; Youth Service Center (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL) ; Lorenzo Coballes Gandía Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 Night) ; Paso a Paso Integration Center (ABE1 ESL) ; P.E.S.C.A Inc. (ABE2 ESL) ; Agustín Rivera Sch. (ABE2 ASE1 ASE2) ; Metropolitan University (ESL Sat.) ; Gabriela Mistral Sch. (ABE3 ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 Night) ; Héctor Hernández Arana Sch. (ABE3 ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 Night) ; Juan Alejo de Arizmendi Sch. (ASE1 ASE2 Night) ; ICOMO (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2) ; Luis Muñoz Rivera Sch. (ABE2 ABE3 ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL Sat.)

VRA Facs: 3 Sat. Office; 1 Region. Office

Local Area: PONCE

Municipalities: Ponce

Estimated Population: 159,660

Proposed Region: Southwest

Labor Market Area: Ponce MSA

Regional Consortia Affiliation: DISUR

One-Stop Facs.: Compr.

WP Facs.; Local Office

Title II Facilities: Dr. Eduardo Newmann Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 Sat.); Pedro Albizu Campos Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL Sat.) ; Llanos del Sur Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 Sat.) ; Municipality of Ponce (ABE1 ABE2 ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL)

VRA Facs: 1 Region. Office

Local Area: San Juan

Municipalities: SAN JUAN

Estimated Population: 380,149

Proposed Region: North Central

Labor Market Area: San Juan MSA

Regional Consortia Affiliation:

One-Stop Facs.: 2 Compr. and 1 Affl.

WP Facs.;

Title II Facilities: Gabriela Mistral Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL); Juan A. Corretjer Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL) ; Villa Palmeras Educational Center (ABE1 ABE2 ABE4 ESL EEES) ; Ernesto Ramos Antonini Sch. (ABE1 ABE2 ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL) ; PRDCR (ABE1 ABE2 ABE3 ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL Sat.) ; M.A.V.I. (ABE1 ABE2 ABE3 ESL) ; Municipality of San Juan (ESL) ; Cantera Corporation (EEES Civics) ; UMET (ESL Sat.) ; Ana G. Méndez Univ. Virtual Campus (ESL Civics) EDP University of Puerto Rico (ESL EEES Civics) ; CMIGRA, Inc. (ABE1 ABE2 ABE3 ABE4 ESL Civics) ; Metropolitan School of Adult Program (ABE1 ABE2 ABE4 ESL) ; Metropolitan School of Adult Program (Civics, Night) ; Hogar CREA, Inc. (ABE1 ABE2 ABE3 ABE4 EEES) ; Cesáreo Rosa Nieves Sch. (ABE1 ABE2 ASE1 ASE2)

VRA Facs: Region. Office; CAA; Sat. Office-UMET; Sat. Office-UPR RP

Local Area: SUR CENTRAL

Municipalities: Coamo; Juana Díaz; Salinas; Santa Isabel; Villaba;

Estimated Population: 40,496; 49,876; 30,506; 23,114; 25,196

Proposed Region: South East

Labor Market Area: Coamo Micro; Ponce MSA; Coco Micro; S. Isabel Micro; Ponce MSA

Regional Consortia Affiliation: DISUR

One-Stop Facs.: 1Compr. ; 4 Affl.

WP Facs.; Local Office

Title II Facilities: Ramón José Dávila Sch. (ASE1 ASE2 Sat.) ; Carlos Colón Burgos Sch. (ABE1 ABE2 ASE1 ASE2 ESL Night) ; Eloísa Pascual Sch. (ABE3 ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL Night) ; Elvira M. Colón Sch. (ASE1 ASE2 Sat.) ; Lysander Borrero Terry Sch. (ASE1 ASE2 Sat.)

VRA Facs: 2 Sat. Office

Local Area: SURESTE

Municipalities: Humacao; Juncos; Las Piedras; Maunabo; Patillas; San Lorenzo; Yabucoa;

Estimated Population: 57,181; 40,284; 38,759; 11,904; 18,766; 40,313; 36,903

Proposed Region: South East

Labor Market Area: San Juan MSA; Guayama MSA

Regional Consortia Affiliation: INTECO; PRTEC; DISUR

One-Stop Facs.: 1 Compr.

WP Facs.; One-Stop

Title II Facilities: Adult Academy (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL Night) ; José Collazo Colón Sch. (ASE1 ASE2 Night) ; Alfonso Casta Martínez Sch. (ABE2 ABE3 ABE4 ESL EEES Night) ; Luis Nabuel Santana Gastón Digital Library; Rafaelina E. Lebrón Flores Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL Night) ; Turabo University (ESL Sat.) ; Rosa Costas Valdivieso Sch. (ASE1 ASE2 ESL EEES Night) ;

VRA Facs: 3 Sat. Office

Local Area: SUROESTE

Municipalities: Cabo Rojo; Guánica; Guayanilla; Hormigueros; Lajas; Maricao; Peñuelas; Sabana Grande; San Germán; Yauco

Estimated Population: 50,706; 18,627; 20,862; 17,023; 25,117; 6,384; 23,307; 24,692; 34,725; 40,391

Proposed Region: Southwest

Labor Market Area: S. Germán MSA; Ponce MSA; Maricao Municipio; Mayaguez MSA

Regional Consortia Affiliation: PRTEC; DISUR; DISUR

One-Stop Facs.: 1 Compr. ; 1 Affl.

WP Facs.; 1 Local Office

Title II Facilities: Inés Maria Mendoza Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 Night) ; Aurea E. Quiles Claudio Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 Sat.) ; Arístides Cales Quirós Sch. (ABE2 ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL Sat.) ; Leonides Morales Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL Night) ; Josefa Vélez Bauza Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 ESL Sat.) ; Blanca Malaret Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 Night) ; Julio V. Guzmán Sch. (ABE4 ASE1 ASE2 Night) ; Universidad del Este (ESL Sat.) ;

VRA Facs: Sat. Office CAA

C. PROVIDE THE APPEALS PROCESS REFERRED TO IN SECTION 106(B)(5) OF WIOA RELATING TO DESIGNATION OF LOCAL AREAS.

The Administrative Letter WIOA–1–2015, seeks to establish the process for considering the request of the initial designation of local areas for the administration of the funds delegated under WIOA, including the appeal procedures in case on an adverse determination regarding the application for a local area designation. Accordingly, a local area that understands that an adverse determination made with respect to its application of automatic or subsequent designation warrants revision, might submit to the state a reconsideration statement addressed to the State Board within a term of 15 calendar days after the date of receipt of the notification. The State Board shall issue a final determination within 15 calendar days after receipt of the review request. If a denial determination is issued, the PEE might file an appeal to the USDOL within 30 calendar days from the date of receipt of the notice of the determination of the State Board.

D. PROVIDE THE APPEALS PROCESS REFERRED TO IN SECTION 121(H)(2)(E) OF WIOA RELATING TO DETERMINATIONS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING.

The State Board will develop public policy and adopt regulations regarding the appeal process applicable to determinations for infrastructure funding.

2. STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES

A. PROVIDE STATE POLICIES OR GUIDANCE FOR THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM AND FOR USE OF STATE FUNDS FOR WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES.

The Planning Guidelines is the official document that sets the public policy and requirements for allocating local area funding for the Youth, Adult and Dislocated Workers programs. In compliance with WIOA regulations, priorities and goals the State planning will meet the needs of services of specific populations and minorities, as well as those of job seekers and employers. The annual Planning Guidelines compile the State and Federal public policies pertaining the management of WIOA funds. This Guide is designed to ensure compliance with ETA policies and goals, as stated in Training and Employment Guidance Letters (TEGL), Training and Employment Notices (TEN), WIOA Final Rules, as well as the State Board policies. Following are some of the items considered in the Planning Guidelines in relation to service delivery under WIOA.

Youth Program

The Guidelines include the eligibility criteria stated in Section 129 (a), as follows:

• Section 129(a)(1)(B), percent Out of School Youth eligibility

• Section 129(a)(1)(C), percent In School Youth eligibility

• Section 129(a)(3)(A)(ii), not more than 5 percent of the individuals might be persons not qualified as low–income individuals. State guidelines require the local boards to develop public policy and eligibility criteria to meet these requirements

It documents the priorities as follows:

• Out of school youth. Section 129(a)(4)(A) of WIOA requires that most of the youth program allocation is used to deliver services to out of school youth. Local Areas must focus their efforts and funds to identify, engage and meet the needs this population, which is a priority under section 129(a)(4)(A) of WIOA, stating that a minimum of 75 percent of the program funds, has to be allocated to out of school youth activities, with priority to older youth.

• Registered Apprenticeship program. Apprenticeship is a business and industry–driven model that will be included as a strategy to increase youth attainment of industry–recognized credentials, as well as to improve youth outcomes. Please, refer to section III(a)(2)(B) for additional information on the program.

• Increasing work experience opportunities. One of the State Board's priorities is to provide the youth with meaningful work experience opportunities and increasing work experiences for older, out–of–school youth. Section 129(c)(4) states that not less than 20 percent of the funds allocated to the local area shall be used to provide in–school youth and out–of–school youth meaningful work experience activities, including: summer employment opportunities, pre–apprenticeship programs, internships and job shadowing, and on–the–job training opportunities. Also, the State Board have established public policy determining that job placement should be made in high–growth, high–demand occupations in small and medium business, among other industries.

• Increasing service delivery for youth with disabilities. The State Board is committed to eliminate the multiple challenges that adversely affect the education and employment of youth with disabilities. The State encourages youth providers to increase services to youth with disabilities.

Adults and Dislocated Workers Program

The Guidelines include the eligibility criteria stated in WIOA for Adults and Dislocated Workers, and consider the following priorities:

• Basic career services

• Individual career services

• State Board policy for the delivery of training services, based on limitations, priority for service and innovative character of the projects

B. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE INTENDS TO USE GOVERNOR'S SET ASIDE FUNDING. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL UTILIZE RAPID RESPONSE FUNDS TO RESPOND TO LAYOFFS AND PLANT CLOSINGS AND COORDINATE SERVICES TO QUICKLY AID COMPANIES AND THEIR AFFECTED WORKERS. STATES ALSO SHOULD DESCRIBE ANY LAYOFF AVERSION STRATEGIES THEY HAVE IMPLEMENTED TO ADDRESS AT RISK COMPANIES AND WORKERS

Statewide activities include two components: required and allowable statewide activities. The first category includes those activities required by WIOA regulation and has a compulsory character. The allowable activities are those that will be delivered by the State, on a discretionary basis, as allowed for in section 129 for the Youth Program, and section 134 for the Adults and Dislocated Workers program. Required activities are managed directly by the PRDEDC's administrative and fiscal divisions, while allowable activities require the input and approval of the State Board. The Board has

developed public policy to govern the allocation of the set–aside funds available to the State and established the priorities for the use of funds and evaluation of activities including innovative projects, incentives to local areas, and research and development, among other priorities. State allocated funds will be used to support the following required and allowable activities:

Youth required activities

• Conducting evaluations • Disseminating a list of eligible providers of youth workforce investment activities • Providing assistance to local areas • Operating a fiscal and management accountability information system • Carrying out monitoring and oversight of activities • Providing additional assistance to local areas that have high concentrations of eligible youth

Youth allowable activities

• Conducting research related to meeting the education and employment needs of eligible youth and demonstration projects related to meeting the education and employment needs of eligible youth. • Supporting the development of alternative, evidence–based programs and other activities that enhance the choices available to eligible youth. • Supporting the provision of career services described in section 134(c)(2) in the one–stop delivery system in the State. • Supporting financial literacy. • Providing technical assistance to, as appropriate, local boards, Chief Elected Officials, One–Stop Centers operators, One–Stop Centers partners, and eligible providers, in local areas.

Adults and dislocated workers required employment and training activities

• Providing Rapid Response services under the Dislocated Workers program. • Providing assistance to State entities and agencies, local areas, and One–Stop Centers partners in carrying out the activities described in the State Unified Plan. • Providing technical assistance to local areas for carrying out the regional planning and service delivery efforts required under section 106(c). • Providing technical assistance to local areas that fail to meet local performance accountability measures described in section 116(c). • Providing assistance to local areas operating a fiscal and management accountability information system in accordance with section 116(i). • Monitoring and overseeing activities. • Disseminating the State list of eligible providers of training services. • Disseminating information identifying eligible providers for on–the–job training, customized training, incumbent worker training, internships, paid or unpaid work experience opportunities, or transitional jobs. • Disseminating information on effective service delivery strategies to serve workers and job seekers. • Disseminating performance information and information on the cost of attendance (including tuition and fees) for participants in applicable programs, as described in subsections (d) and (h) of section 122. • Disseminating information on physical and programmatic accessibility, in accordance with section188, if applicable, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.), for individuals with disabilities. • Completing program and service delivery evaluations.

Adults and dislocated workers' allowable employment and training activities

As directed or as allowed, the following training activities will be delivered under the program:

• Implementing innovative programs and strategies designed to meet the needs of all employers (including small employers) in the State. • Developing strategies for effectively serving individuals with barriers to employment and for coordinating programs and services among one–stop partners. • Developing or identifying education and training programs that respond to real–time labor market

analysis, that accelerate course or credential completion. • Implementing programs to increase the number of individuals training for and placed in nontraditional employment. • Executing activities to facilitate remote access to services, including training services including facilitating access through the use of technology. • Providing career services. • Coordinating activities with the children welfare system to facilitate provision of services for children and youth who are eligible for assistance under section 477 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 677). • Promoting research and demonstration projects related to meeting the employment and education needs of adult and dislocated workers. • Implementing promising services for workers and businesses. • Providing incentive grants to local areas for performance by the local areas on local performance accountability measures described in section 116(c). • Adopting, calculating, or commissioning for approval an economic self–sufficiency standard for the State. • Developing and disseminating common intake procedures and related items, including registration processes, materials, or software. • Providing technical assistance to local areas that are implementing pay–for–performance contract strategies. • Completing evaluations of adopted service delivery strategies.

Governor set–aside funds

The state set aside funds shall be allocated for the development of innovative projects, aimed at updating skills and training workers in response to the needs of both the participant and the employer. The aim is for these innovative approaches to be used as service delivery models that could be replicated by the local areas.

The State Board is responsible for establishing the public policy regarding the use of the Governor's reserve funds. The Board's policy specifies the priorities with respect to industries or economic sectors that will benefit from set–aside funding, which are aided by guidelines to assess the need for a specific funding target as well as to determine the merit and the expected outcomes of these initiatives.

Innovative approaches must be directed towards the priorities identified in the State Unified Plan and aligned with economic changes, new technology, the development of local and regional economies, and the development of a skilled workforce through employment and training. These priorities can be summarized under the following project categories:

• Small and medium–sized business leading to the creation of jobs through new business or through the expansion of current industries, and/or through creation of new jobs to promote goods and services for export or subcontracting with multinational companies.

• Science and Technology (high–tech and high–growth industries) industries creating jobs or updating the skills of incumbent workers in industries that are in the process of transforming their operations by introducing new technology in areas such as high–tech manufacturing, research and development, biotechnology, biomolecule science and/or food production technologies.

• Development of partnerships among business and industries, the educational organizations (universities and community colleges) and community–based and faith– based organizations, for the development of new training approaches customized to employment needs in targeted industrial clusters.

• Other activities allowed under WIOA regulation, promoting unsubsidized job placement and retention in the education, health, allied health, tourism, industrial clusters and retail sales.

• Training alternatives to address skill gaps or lack of employment skills.

• Industries located in geographic areas facing economic development difficulties due to recent layoffs, permanent closure of industries, natural disasters or massive unemployment, among other conditions.

• Leveraging of funds through initiatives that rely on braided contributions and/or involving non–traditional and varied sources of funds.

• Layoff aversion activities or strategies to prevent or halt significant layoffs.

Rapid Response Office

The Rapid Response Office of the Workforce Development Program was established to ensure the effective delivery of service to dislocated workers in compliance with program requirements. Rapid Response activities are provided to assist dislocated workers in obtaining reemployment as soon as possible through services such as:

• Coordination of Rapid Response services by working with company management and, as applicable, organized labor representatives

• Provision of on–site services including information on assistance programs such as unemployment insurance compensation, job search assistance, and retraining opportunities

• Immediate referrals to WIA and other public programs available in the local area, which respond to the reemployment and readjustment needs of workers

The Rapid Response services are promoted not only as a tool for providing services to workers affected by plant closings or massive layoff but also as an alternative for the business sector to avert a possible closing and improve the skills of their workers. The workforce system, in collaboration with economic development agencies, has provided alternatives to those companies that struggle to avert a plant closing.

In PY 2014, Rapid Response delivered services to 5,732 dislocated workers from manufacturing, pharmaceutical, business and professional services, public administration and communication industries. The service industry, accounting for 67% of total dislocated workers, became the most affected employment sector by layoffs. The sector included retail trade, professional services, and protective services, among others. Manufacturing industries continued to lose employment with 25% of total dislocated workers, followed by the public administration sector, which lost with 7% and pharmaceutical industry with 1% of dislocated workers. The services and manufacturing sectors accumulated 91% of total dislocated workers in PY 2014.

The Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) was delivered to 1,811 dislocated workers, representing 36% of the affected individuals. This notification facilitates providing the Rapid Response services in advance of a layoff event. Through the WARN notification and other sources, employers projected the number of employees to be dislocated. The main reason stated as cause for layoffs was expiration of contracts, which accounted for two–thirds of cases, followed by the economic situation with 14%, transfer of operations with 10%, restructuring process with 8%, and change of operator accounting for 2% of total layoffs.

C. IN ADDITION, DESCRIBE THE STATE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO PROVIDE RAPID RESPONSES IN CASES OF NATURAL DISASTERS INCLUDING COORDINATION WITH FEMA AND OTHER ENTITIES.

VI.A.2.C. IN ADDITION, DESCRIBE THE STATE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO PROVIDE RAPID RESPONSES IN CASES OF NATURAL DISASTERS INCLUDING COORDINATION WITH FEMA AND OTHER ENTITIES. PUERTO RICO DID NOT DESCRIBE HOW SERVICES WILL BE COORDINATED.

The Dislocated Worker Unit or UETDP (for its acronym in Spanish) coordinates Rapid Response efforts as part of State's disaster response and recovery plan in cases of natural disasters. Once the UETDP becomes aware that a mass layoff resulted from a disaster or emergency, it contacts affected workers through employers or mass communication media to offer its services, including but not limited to: • Filing for Disaster Unemployment Insurance (DUA) • Assistance in accessing other supportive services • Psychological services • Workshops • Information of labor market and job opportunities in case there is no chance to return to previous employment • Temporary jobs for disaster rehabilitation efforts Rapid Response mobile units are readily deployed to provide the services if no other facilities are available. Under the auspices of FEMA, the Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Relief Act is administered locally by the Department of Labor through the PRDOLHR. The program provides unemployment benefits and reemployment services to individuals who have become unemployed as result of a major disaster, and who are not eligible for regular unemployment compensation benefits or extended benefits. The assistance is available to eligible individuals as long as the major disaster continues, but no longer than 26 weeks after the disaster declaration. The UETDP directly coordinates with the PRDOLHR, core program agency in charge of unemployment compensation, the support to be provided to workers in filing claims to access FEMA's assistance. As mandated, the Commonwealth provides, without reimbursement, reemployment assistance services that might be required by the participants.

FEMA's assistance for disaster recovery and reconstruction activities is administered by the Governor's Authorized Representative (GAR), which acts as the grantee. Executive Order No. 2013-71 transferred the duties of the GAR, previously held by the Commonwealth's OMB, to the Puerto Rico State Agency Office for Emergency and Disaster Management (OEDM). The agency also oversees the implementation of the Commonwealth's Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Shortly after a disaster declaration, the UETPD coordinates with the OEDM the need and scope of a request for funding under the National Dislocated Worker Grants (NDWG) to leverage additional funds to carry out mitigation activities not covered by or complementary to those funded under FEMA's Public Assistance Program. The purpose of this subsidy is the creation of temporary jobs to provide labor for the cleaning and reconstruction of devastated areas by events of disasters. The temporary jobs are limited to public agencies or non for-profit organizations and should not exceed 6 months or 1,040 hours of duration, or longer if an extension is authorized. An individual who was temporary or permanently dislocated as result of a disaster event qualifies for public assistance following a declaration of FEMA to these effects. Additionally, an individual who has been unemployed for a long period, as defined by the State, might become eligible according to section 170(d)(2).

D. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE PROVIDES EARLY INTERVENTION (E.G., RAPID RESPONSE) TO WORKER GROUPS ON WHOSE BEHALF A TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE (TAA) PETITION HAS BEEN FILED. (SECTION 134(A)(2)(A).) THIS

DESCRIPTION MUST INCLUDE HOW THE STATE DISSEMINATES BENEFIT INFORMATION TO PROVIDE TRADE-AFFECTED WORKERS IN THE GROUPS IDENTIFIED IN THE TAA PETITIONS WITH AN ACCURATE UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROVISION OF TAA BENEFITS AND SERVICES IN SUCH A WAY THAT THEY ARE TRANSPARENT TO THE TRADE-AFFECTED DISLOCATED WORKER APPLYING FOR THEM (TRADE ACT SEC. 221(A)(2)(A) AND SEC. 225; GOVERNOR-SECRETARY AGREEMENT). DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE FUNDS THAT HAVE BEEN RESERVED FOR RAPID RESPONSE TO PROVIDE SERVICES FOR EVERY WORKER GROUP THAT FILES A TAA PETITION.

The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program assists workers who lost their jobs as a result of international trade factors. The program's primary goal is to facilitate the return workers to a suitable employment, using a range of services, including counseling, assessment, training, and job placement. The TAA program is one component of the integrated products and services available through the One Stop Career Centers. The TAA program helps individuals regain economic self–sufficiency by quickly securing and maintaining employment and providing income support to allow individuals to enroll in training to obtain new and suitable employment and a limited wage supplement for older workers who became reemployed in lower paying jobs.

Qualified participants for this program can receive the following services:

• Skills assessments, individual employment plans, career counseling, supportive services, and information on training labor markets

• Classroom training, on the–job training, customized training designed to meet the needs of a specific employer or group of employers, apprenticeship programs, and more

• Income support available in the form of weekly cash payments to workers who are enrolled in a full–time training course and have exhausted their unemployment insurance

• Reimbursement for costs of seeking employment outside of the worker's commuting area

• Reimbursement for relocation costs for employment outside of the worker's commuting area

• A wage subsidy for up to two years that is available to re–employed older workers and covers a portion of the difference between a worker's new wage and their old wage (up to specified maximum amount)

As previously mentioned, the TAA program has been integrated with core programs in the One Stop Careers Centers. The State's Rapid Response gives the first services to the industry and determines if the industry qualifies to be certified for the TAA program. If the industry is eligible, the TAA staff helps the industry to file a petition on line or by mail with the USDOL. After the worker is certified and has his petition number and received the first services from the state Rapid Response and the One–Stop Centers, he or she will start receiving services from the TAA program. The One–Stop Centers services provided to TAA's participants generally consist of skills assessment, information about employment, job counseling, job placement and supportive services.

B. ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKERS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

1. IF THE STATE IS UTILIZING WORK-BASED TRAINING MODELS (E.G. ON-THE-JOB TRAINING, INCUMBENT WORKER TRAINING, TRANSITIONAL JOBS, AND CUSTOMIZED TRAINING) AS PART OF ITS TRAINING STRATEGY AND THESE STRATEGIES ARE NOT ALREADY DISCUSSED IN OTHER SECTIONS OF THE PLAN, DESCRIBE THE STATE'S STRATEGIES FOR HOW THESE MODELS ENSURE HIGH QUALITY TRAINING FOR BOTH THE PARTICIPANT AND THE EMPLOYER.

As stated in WIOA, there are a variety of work–based learning services, which provide employers opportunities to customize the training offered to future employees based on the task and functions required for the job. Work–based learning also enables the participants to learn the transferable skills that will lead to employment and future advancement. OJT is perhaps the most involved service that the program can offer to an employer.

Through the State's Rapid Response Unit, layoff aversion strategies are pursued emphasizing the relationship with the employers prior to the announcement of a layoff, potentially enabling strategic interventions to prevent the layoff under consideration. Also, through the Rapid Response Unit, incumbent worker training is going to be used in a more proactive way as WIOA allows for this strategy to be utilized independent of the layoff aversion criteria outlined.

Please, refer to section III(a)(2)(C) for additional information on the program.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL INCORPORATE REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP INTO ITS STRATEGY AND SERVICES.

Registered Apprenticeship Program

Puerto Rico will join the rest of jurisdictions currently implementing the program. A bill has been forwarded to create the "Puerto Rico Apprenticeship Program", ascribed to the PRDOLHR, with the purpose of stimulating and assisting industries in developing and improving apprenticeship and training programs designed to provide skilled workers, in compliance with the National Apprenticeship Act of 1937. The statute will incorporate collaboration mandates with the components of the workforce system.

The workforce system plans to tap on the flexibility afforded to the Registered Apprenticeship program under Title I–B's automatic eligibility status of apprenticeship sponsors, to expand the opportunities for work–related instruction, including advancing the provision of services through:

• Employers who provide formal in–house instruction as well as on–the–job training at the work site

• Employers who rely on a post–secondary institution, technical training school, eligible provider of adult education and literacy activities under title II to provide the instruction

• Joint Apprenticeship Training Programs delivered by employers and unions

• Intermediaries serving as program sponsors by taking responsibility for the administration of the apprenticeship program, providing expertise such as curriculum development, classroom instruction and supportive services, as appropriate, and including:

• Educational institutions administering the program, working with employers to hire apprentices and providing classroom or on–line instruction for the apprenticeship program

• Industry associations, including professional associations involved in the maintenance process of credentials for certain trades in Puerto Rico, administering the program and working with employer/members and educational entities to implement the apprenticeship program

• Community–based organizations administering the program and working with employers, educational entities and the community to implement the apprenticeship program

Registered Apprenticeship will also be delivered as a career pathway for job seekers and as a job–driven strategy for employers and industries. As required, procedures will be implemented by the PRDOLHR to add Registered Apprenticeship programs to the State list of eligible training providers and to verify their status, considering timely data collection requirements on new programs, including information on occupations included in the program; method and length of instruction; and, number of active apprentices.

3. PROVIDE THE PROCEDURE, ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA, AND INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS FOR DETERMINING TRAINING PROVIDER INITIAL AND CONTINUED ELIGIBILITY, INCLUDING REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS (WIOA SECTION 122).

VI.I-B(B)(3). PROVIDE THE PROCEDURE, ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS FOR DETERMINING TRAINING PROVIDER INITIAL AND CONTINUED INCLUDING REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS (WIOA SECTION 122). PUERTO RICO'S PROCEDURE FOR DETERMINING THE ELIGIBILITY OF TRAINING PROVIDERS IS NOT COMPLIANT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF WIOA SECTION 122 OR WITH THE GUIDANCE ISSUED IN TEGL 41-14.

The Procedure for Initial and Continuous Eligibility for Training Providers contains the State policy applicable to WIOA training providers. The policies guide the procedures, directives and the threshold criteria for achieving a determination of eligibility of educational institutions interested in providing training and learning services for adults and dislocated workers, in compliance with section 122 of WIOA.

As required under WIOA, the State procedures:

• Establish eligibility procedures and clarify State and Local Board roles and responsibilities.

• Were adopted in consultation with the State and Local Boards.

• Were adopted after affording an opportunity for interested members of the public to make recommendations and submit comments.

• Facilitate a mechanism for adding Registered Apprenticeship programs to the list and to verify their registered status at least every two years.

• Establish a validation procedure to assess at the State level whether the provider submitted accurate information, and to take enforcement actions as needed, including revocation of eligibility.

• Direct the WDP to disseminate the list to the Local Boards, the One-Stop Delivery System, its partner programs, and the public.

• Establish a process to determine if minimum performance levels for eligibility are met.

• Provide for the removal of programs that do not meet State-established program criteria or performance levels for eligibility.

• Establish an appeals process for providers to request revision of a denial of eligibility.

Under the procedures, Local Boards are allow to set additional eligibility criteria, information requirements, and minimum performance levels for local providers beyond what is required by the Governor. Any additional requirements established by the Local Board will only affect a program's eligibility and performance level eligibility requirements within the local area. As required under section C.I of the State procedures, Local Boards must periodically request public and private providers to submit applications to provide training services for occupations in-demand. Such requests must specify the information required as part of the submittal.

Under the procedures, Local Boards are required, among other functions, to:

• Request and evaluate applications.

• Recommend the approval of the initial eligibility of entities providing a program of training services.

• Recommend the continued eligibility of providers.

• Provide opportunity to reconsider their adverse determinations. • Give providers notice of the State's determination regarding a Local Board recommendation and, if adverse, notify the State Board's reasons for denial and appeals process.

• Recommend the inclusion in the State List of training providers qualified under the Registered Apprenticeship program.

The following institutions may request an eligibility determination, initial or continuing, to provide training services under WIOA:

• Higher education institutions that offer a program that leads to a postsecondary recognized credential

• Any other public or private institution with training programs, which may include joint labor–management apprenticeship organization and occupational technical training

• Eligible adult education and literacy service provider under Title II, if these activities are provided in combination with training in occupational skills

• Community Based Organizations (CBOs) or private organizations of demonstrated effectiveness that provide training under contract with the Local Board

Local Boards are also required to assess the economic, geographic and demographic conditions in the areas where applicants have offered or will be offering their services, and must analyze the characteristics of the target participants, including any difficulty that might arise in serving those populations. Each Local Board will determine the occupations in-demand for which related training services will be procured in their geographic area and must submit these data to the State Board no later than May each year in order to be eligible to recommend training programs for inclusion in the State List.

Upon request, sponsors or institutions that offer training programs registered under the National Apprenticeship Act, will be automatically included and maintained on the list for as long as the program remains registered under the National Apprenticeship Act. On-the-job training, customized training, incumbent worker training, and transitional employment providers are not subject to the requirements of the eligible training provider provisions. Also exempted are services for which the Local Board determines that any of the following conditions are met:

• There are insufficient providers.

• There is a training services program with demonstrated effectiveness offered in the local area by a community-based organization or other private organization to serve individuals with barriers to employment as defined under section 3(34) of WIOA.

• It would be most appropriate to award a contract to an IHE or other eligible provider of training services in order to facilitate the training of multiple individuals in in-demand industry sectors or occupations, and such contract does not limit customer choice.

• The Local Board provides training services through a pay-for-performance contract.

Any educational provider seeking initial eligibility determination must complete the application and submit the required information electronically to the Local Board. Providers might submit an application at any time during the year. Applicants are required to provide the following information:

• A complete and precise description of each training program to be offered including curriculum, O*NET codes, skills and knowledge prerequisites, costs, duration, and evidence of certification of funds under Title IV of HEA for the location where the program is to be offered, specifying date of issuance, if applicable

• Specification of in-demand industry sectors and occupations aligned with their training services

• Evidence of the financial stability of the provider or institution

• If applicable, evidence of State license to operate issued by the PREC, for each location where the training program will be offered

• Information addressing factors related to the indicators of performance, as described in secs. 116(b)(2)(A)(i)(I) through (IV) of WIOA, including unsubsidized employment (second quarter after exit), unsubsidized employment (fourth quarter after exit), median earnings, and credentials attainment.

• Information concerning whether the provider is in a partnership with businesses providing employment, including information about the quality and quantity of employer partnerships

• Information to demonstrate if program of training services leads to an industry recognized credential and/or recognized post-secondary credential

• Evidence to demonstrate compliance with the legal and regulatory provisions on equal opportunity and non-discrimination, reasonable accommodation and physical and programmatic accessibility

Section C(II)(a) of the Governor's procedures outlines the roles of the State and local areas in receiving and reviewing provider applications, and in making initial eligibility determinations. After evaluating the application and, if deemed eligible, the Local Board should recommend to the WDP its inclusion in the State List. No later than thirty (30) days after receipt, the WDP will validate the information provided by the Local Board and will determine if the recommended program and service provider comply with the established criteria. If the criteria for initial eligibility are met, the provider will be considered initially eligible. If the opposite were the case, the WDP will notify the Local Board the programs that were not considered eligible and the reasons for denial. If the WDP does not act upon the recommendation within the established period of thirty (30) days, the recommendation for eligibility will be automatically validated.

The Local Board will notify the applicant the eligibility determination by the WDP including, in the case of denial, the reasons and the right to request an appeal. Either the Local Board or the WDP might deny eligibility if the provider does not comply with submitting a complete proposal, or the provider is not licensed or authorized to operate, if so required.

The WDP will include the validated providers and their approved programs in the State List of Training Services Providers, which will be electronically disseminated throughout the One-Stop Delivery System. The list will be updated following the initial eligibility determination of any training services' provider and the WDP will notify the update to the Local Board in writing. The State List will contain accompanying performance and cost information disaggregated by local area served, as applicable, including:

• Recognized post-secondary credential(s) offered

• Provider information supplied to meet the Governor's eligibility procedure

• Performance and cost information aligned with the time periods

• Additional information as the Governor determines appropriate, such as the number of units (for example, credits, hours or semesters) needed to earn the credentials offered

As directed under WIOA, the initial eligibility of any provider will be valid for the period of one year.

Section C(II)(b) of the Governor's procedures outlines the roles of the State and local areas in receiving and reviewing provider applications to decide if continued eligibility is granted. Newly eligible training providers that were determined to be eligible by transitioning into WIOA were subjected to the application procedure for continued eligibility before their initial year of eligibility expired. Applicants applying for continued eligibility are required to provide information to assess the following parameters:

• Performance accountability measures described in secs. 116(b)(2)(A)(i)(I) through (IV) of WIOA, including unsubsidized employment (Second Quarter after Exit), unsubsidized employment (Second Quarter after Exit), Median Earnings and Credential Attainment. If data is not yet available, compliance with the following alternate factors, as applicable: at least 75% of participants completing the program during the last two academic years; or, at least 70% of participants employed in the occupations related to the training program during the last two academic years, 60% if the occupation requires licensure.

• Expansion of access to training services, including access in rural areas and digital access.

• Information reported on a biennial basis identifying the recognized post-secondary credentials received by WIOA participants, program cost information with tuition and fees, and completion rate for WIOA participants.

• Information reported to State agencies on Federal and State training programs other than programs under WIOA title I-B, including one-stop partner programs.

• Degree to which the training programs relate to in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

• Required licensure issued by the PREC, if applicable.

• The ability of providers to offer training services that lead to post-secondary and industry recognized credentials.

• The quality of the program of training services, including attainment of a recognized post-secondary credential.

• The ability of the providers to provide training services that are physically and programmatically accessible for both individuals who are employed and individuals with barriers to employment, including individuals with disabilities.

• The timeliness and accuracy of the eligible training provider's performance reports

• The ability of a provider to partner with employers and to provide job placement services.

After the Local Board evaluates the application within a period no longer than thirty (30) days after receipt, it will determine if the request for continued eligibility complies with the established criteria and other criteria required by the Local Board. If the criteria for initial eligibility are met, the provider will be considered eligible. If the opposite were the case, the Local Board will notify the adverse eligibility determination to the applicant, including the reasons for denial and the right to request reconsideration before the Local Board, as directed under section E(I) of the State procedures.

The day after the evaluation process is completed, the Local Board will advance to the WDP a certified list of the programs approved for continued eligibility, corresponding information and a recommendation to maintain the programs in the State List. The WDP must validate the Local Board's determination regarding the program and provider's compliance with the established criteria in a period no longer than thirty (30) days after receipt. If the WDP does not act upon the recommendation within that term, the program will be automatically considered eligible.

The WDP will notify its determination to the Local Board. If the program is determined not to be eligible, the WDP will detail the reasons for its decision. The Local Board will notify the provider the determination of the WDP and, if it were adverse, the reasons for denial and information regarding the appeals process before the State Board, as provided under section E(II) of the State procedures.

As specified under E(I) of the State procedures, either the Local Board or the WDP might deny the provider its eligibility if the provider does not comply with the performance levels negotiated for the Local Area; or, if it fails to submit a complete proposal or is not authorized to operate, as might be required. For eligible programs, continued eligibility will be in effect for two (2) years. As required under WIOA and section D(II) of the State procedures, a training provider must deliver results and provide accurate information in order to retain its status as an eligible training provider. At least every two years, the WDP, in consultation with the Local Board might remove the provider from the list of approved providers for false reporting, for substantially violating a provision of title I of WIOA or its implementing regulations including non-discrimination provisions, failure to meet required performance outcomes, or debarment. The biennial review will also include verification of the registration status of registered apprenticeship programs.

A provider removed from the list of eligible training providers is liable to repay all adult and dislocated workers' training funds received during the period of noncompliance. The WDP and Local Areas will ensure that any participants currently enrolled in a removed training program experience minimal disruption. Any provider so revoked might submit an appeal before the WPD, pursuant to section F of the State procedures, once notified of the reasons for its eligibility revocation and the right to appeal from the determination.

As directed under WIOA, Registered Apprenticeship program sponsors that request to be eligible training providers are automatically included on the State List and will remain included as long as the program is registered or until the program sponsor notifies the State that it no longer wants to be included on the list. As such, Registered Apprenticeship programs are not subject to the same application and performance information requirements because they go through a detailed vetting procedure to become a Registered Apprenticeship program sponsor with the USDOL or the State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA).

Until the approval of the State Plan, Puerto Rico remained one of the last jurisdictions not implementing the Registered Apprenticeship Program. The State Plan directed to implement the program. Executive Order 2016-32 was approved by the Governor in July 1, 2016 to establish the "Puerto Rico Apprenticeship Program", ascribed to the PRDOLHR, with the purpose of stimulating and assisting industries in developing and improving apprenticeship and training programs designed to prepare skilled workers, in compliance with the National Apprenticeship Act of 1937. The PRDOLHR was designated as the Commonwealth's SAA.

As such, it is responsible for:

• Registering Apprenticeship programs that meet Federal and State standards

• Protecting the safety and welfare of apprentices

• Issuing nationally recognized and portable Certificates of Completion to apprentices

• Promoting the development of new programs through marketing and technical assistance

• Ensuring that all programs provide high quality training

• Ensuring that all programs produce skilled competent workers

To implement the plan's directive, section II(C)(3) of the State procedures enable the coordination required to include in the State List those sponsors registered in the Apprenticeship program. On a quarterly basis, pursuant to section II(C)(4) of the State procedures, the WDP will contact the SAA to solicit any sponsor that requests inclusion in the State List. Pursuant to TEGL 41-14(8)(c), the following information should be required from sponsors by the SAA, which will also satisfy the information requirement established by section II(C)(4) of the State procedures:

• Occupations included within the Registered Apprenticeship program

• The name and address of the Registered Apprenticeship program sponsor

• The name and address of the Related Technical Instruction provider, and the location of instruction if different from the program sponsor's address

• The method and length of instruction

• The number of active apprentices

Registered sponsors that requested their inclusion in the State List will be added automatically and, correspondingly, will be electronically disseminated through the One-Stop Delivery System, as directed under section II(C)(5) of the State procedures. Pursuant to section II(C)(6) of the State procedures, every two (2) years, the WDP will coordinate with SAA to purge from the State List any sponsor that is not longer registered in the Apprenticeship program.

4. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR THE PRIORITY FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS, OTHER LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS, AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF WIOA SEC. 134(C)(3)(E), WHICH APPLIES TO INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER SERVICES AND TRAINING SERVICES FUNDING BY THE ADULT FORMULA PROGRAM.

One of the most important groups needing WIOA services is the one comprised by economically disadvantaged individuals. The goal of WIOA is to increase employment, retention, and earnings of participants and improve the quality of the workforce to sustain economic growth, enhance productivity and competitiveness and reduce welfare dependency. Based on the characteristics of the low–income adults and public assistance recipients served with adult funds, the goal of the State consists of expanding and improving the quality of services and outcomes. Efforts will be oriented toward the improvement of the timeliness and effectiveness of early intervention activities; and of the responsiveness of services to the individual needs of the low–income adults and public assistance recipient as follows:

• To provide a better integration of different services available through the One Stop Delivery System.

• To empower the eligible adults with the opportunity to select the individualized career services that serve their service needs and goals.

• To empower the eligible adults with the opportunity to select training opportunities available on a statewide basis through the Individual Training Accounts (ITA's).

• To provide universal access in the One Stop Delivery System to choose the employment related services.

• To increase employment retention and earnings of individuals.

• To improve the quality of the workforce to sustain economic growth, enhance productivity and competitiveness.

• To foster community development programs designed to provide self–employment opportunities to economically disadvantaged individuals in order to motivate their interests and capacity through entrepreneur's activities.

Under title I of WIOA, the workforce and innovation system will provide the framework for delivery of workforce investment activities at the State and local levels to individuals who need those services including job seekers, dislocated workers, youth, incumbent workers, new entrants to the workforce, veterans, persons with disabilities, and employers. The State Board shall establish policies, interpretations, guidelines and definitions to implement priorities in the delivery of service for this population. As mentioned previously, the Planning Guidelines is the official document that sets the public policy and requirements for Local Areas funds allocation in the Youth, Adult and Dislocated Workers programs. The guidelines are consistent with federal regulations.

5. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S CRITERIA REGARDING LOCAL AREA TRANSFER OF FUNDS BETWEEN THE ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAMS.

The Planning Guidelines is also the official document that sets the public policy and requirements for local area funds allocation regarding the Youth, Adult and Dislocated Workers programs. Section VIII of the guidelines establishes the public policy for transfer of funds between the adult and dislocated worker programs. Section 133(b)(4) of WIOA allows for the transfer of 100 percent of funds between adults and dislocated workers programs, subject to the approval of the Governor. The local areas transfer requests are evaluated according to the need of each local area. To request transfers between programs, local areas must present to the State a transfer application that include:

• Transfer application, signed by the president of the Board of Mayors and the president of the Local Board

• Certification of the Local Board in quorum, with the presentation of the minutes of the meeting in which are discussed the scope of the transfer of funds, together with the vote held to authorize it

• Statistical data of the closures of business, industries or employers, as well as the dislocated workers or adults with need, which justify and evidence the need for increase services in the program which funds will be transferred (applications received without this information will not be considered for evaluation)

• Measures to be implemented to avoid any adverse impacts on the services of the program from which funds were transferred or reduced

• Amendment to the Programmatic Participants Summary (PPS) when the transfer impacts the delivery of service and change the amount of participants that will be served

• Two Budget Information Summaries (BIS), one including the transferred amount to maintain the identity of the program where it is transferred, and another reflecting the reduction of the program from which the transfer takes place

Transfer of funds will be made only after completing a thorough analysis of the impacts on the service in the affected programs. The Local Board in charge of establishing the priorities and outcomes of the local areas will consider the impact in the service delivery at the One Stop Centers prior to completing a transfer of funds.

C. YOUTH PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

With respect to youth workforce investment activities authorized in section 129 of WIOA,—

1. IDENTIFY THE STATE-DEVELOPED CRITERIA TO BE USED BY LOCAL BOARDS IN AWARDING GRANTS FOR YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES AND DESCRIBE HOW THE LOCAL BOARDS WILL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE ABILITY OF THE PROVIDERS TO MEET PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES BASED ON PRIMARY INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YOUTH PROGRAM AS DESCRIBED IN SECTION 116(B)(2)(A)(II) OF WIOA IN AWARDING SUCH GRANTS.*

* Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(i)(V)

As provided in sec. 123 of WIOA, local boards must identify eligible providers of youth workforce development activities in the local area by awarding grants or contracts on a competitive basis based on the recommendation of the youth standing committee, whose establishment will be encouraged by the State Board.

The Local Boards must include the State plan criteria used to identify youth providers, taking into consideration the ability of the provider to meet performance accountability measures based on the primary indicators of performance for the youth programs. Also, must conduct a full and open competition to secure that the selection of youth service providers is made in accordance with federal procurement guidelines in 2 CFR parts 200, in addition to applicable State and local procurement laws.

Where the Local Board determines there is an insufficient number of eligible providers of youth workforce development activities in the local area, such as might be the case in a rural area, the Local Board might opt to award grants or contracts on a sole source basis (WIOA sec. 123(b)).

Local youth programs must be designed to provide for an objective assessment of each youth participant that meets the requirements of WIOA Section 129(c)(1)(A), and include a review of the academic and occupational skill levels, as well as the service needs, of each youth for the purpose of identifying appropriate services and career pathways for participants and informing the individual service strategy. Also, to develop and update, as needed, an individual service strategy for each youth participant and provide case management to youth participants, including follow–up services. Local areas must ensure that WIOA youth service providers meet the referral requirements established in sec. 129(c)(3)(A) of WIOA for all youth participants.

According to sec. 129(c)(2) of WIOA, local areas must make each of the required 14 youth elements available to youth participants. According to WIOA sec. 129(c)(3)(C), the local areas must ensure that parents, youth participants, and other members of the community with experience relating to youth programs are actively involved in both the design and implementation of its youth programs. A minimum of 75% of State and local youth funding is to be used by local areas for out–of–school youth (OSY). At least 20% of local Youth formula funds must be used for work experiences, such as summer and year round employment, pre–apprenticeship, OJT, internships or job shadowing.

Youth program providers must provide a detailed description of each program element with youth performance information (for WIA/WIOA youth providers). Performance information for each training

program will include a detailed description of the provider partnerships with business partners, and a provider must not be found in fault in criminal, civil, or administrative proceeding related to its performance as a training or educational institution and must not be included in any Federal, State, or local debarment and suspension lists.

2. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL USE TO ACHIEVE IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH AS DESCRIBED IN 129(A)(1)(B), INCLUDING HOW IT WILL LEVERAGE AND ALIGN THE CORE PROGRAMS, AND COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN, REQUIRED AND OPTIONAL ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS, AND ANY OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE.

Out of school youth are one of the most difficult populations to serve because their primary interest lies in attaining self–sufficiency. Local Areas received youth with facing diverse economic and social barriers to achieve their academic or employment goals. Among these: below average academic and reading levels; risks of becoming dropouts, homeless, runaway, foster child, pregnant or parents, offenders; or in need of additional assistance to obtain and maintain employment. To improve the out of school youth outcomes the State will pursue the following strategies:

• Use of Waiver Flexibility

• WIOA regulations at 20 CFR 681.400 that establish the process to be used in selecting eligible youth providers, which requires that the fourteen Program Elements for Youth be provided for through a competitive procurement process. The waiver was requested in order for WIOA funded local area staff to directly provide in–house services for the following three program elements: Support Services; Follow–up Services and Work Experience.

• WIOA section 129(c)(2) establishing prohibition on use of Individual Training Accounts for Youth. This waiver enhances out school individual choice in their education and training plans. Through this waiver the Local Areas can combine ITAs with the fourteen Youth Elements to help out of school youth achieve their personal goals.

• Implementation of the Registered Apprenticeship. Registered Apprenticeship will be implemented as a useful strategy to increase youth attainment of industry–recognized credentials, as well as to improve youth outcomes.

• Foster a structured approach for out of school youth emphasizing the importance of a youth program design that includes meaningful work experiences that integrate work–based learning and academic classroom learning, as a strategy to strengthen services to out of school youth. Local areas will be encouraged to design this activity by providing a greater number of hours in work experience combined with alternative secondary school, support service and academic learning for the out of school youth.

• Strengthening Employer Collaboration. Increase partnerships with employers to foster economic development and high–growth opportunities for out of school youth. The WIOA system has the mission to prepare and train workers, and to help businesses find qualified workers to meet their present and future workforce needs. Local areas will be encouraged to integrate employers to help define and support new strategies designed to better educate, train, and prepare out of school youth and to provide critical leadership in the creation of these pipeline strategies.

• Also, employers can help the workforce system by identifying the skills and competencies needed in the industry, particularly for entry–level positions; developing industry certification; collaborating with training institutions in occupational–skills curriculum development; creating student internships and work experience opportunities; providing formal mentoring programs and partnerships that support youth in their interest to pursue careers in high–growth and high–demand industries; and acquiring employer and industry commitments to hire youth. Also, under WIOA, employers are the main partner in the implementation of Apprenticeship training opportunities and certifications.

When designing youth employment and training programming, State and local areas should consider the following design elements; promotion and increase of meaningful work experience opportunities as set forth in section 129(c)(2)(c) of WIOA, particularly for out of school youth; increase of service delivery for youth with disabilities; need to address the issues impacting service delivery for out of school youth; need to ensure quality case management through the monitoring process; and provision of effective follow–up services.

The state level will provide technical assistance to local areas for carrying out the necessary activities to improve the outcomes for out of school youth as described in section 129(a)(1)(B).

3. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THAT ALL 14 PROGRAM ELEMENTS DESCRIBED IN WIOA SECTION 129(C)(2) ARE MADE AVAILABLE AND EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENTED.*

* Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(i)(I)

WIOA eligible youth are individuals between the ages of 14 and 24 that are either Out of School Youth or In School Youth as defined by WIOA's section 129(a)(1). These must also meet one of the following additional conditions: being basic skills deficient; be an English language learner; an offender; homeless, runaway, in foster care or aged out of the foster care system; pregnant or parenting; an individual with a disability; or a person who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment.

Services are provided to eligible youth participants through a network of youth service providers, which are competitively procured. The Youth program is committed to providing, through local areas, the following required youth elements:

• Tutoring, study skills training, instruction and evidence–based drop–out prevention and recovery strategies

• Alternative secondary school services or drop–out recovery services

• Paid and unpaid work experiences

• Occupational skills training

• Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation

• Leadership development

• Supportive services

• Adult mentoring

• Comprehensive guidance and counseling

• Financial literacy education

• Entrepreneurial skills training

• Labor market and employment information services

• Activities that prepare for transition to post–secondary education and training

• Follow–up services

In order to become an eligible Youth training provider, the entity must first contact the local area to apply. The area will conduct a competitive bidding process to award locally procured youth contracts. The statewide youth eligible provider list is comprehensive list of those locally procured youth contracts. Once the entity has successfully completed the application process dictated in the local area policy, the application is then referred to the State program to be included on the statewide youth provider list.

4. PROVIDE THE LANGUAGE CONTAINED IN THE STATE POLICY FOR "REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO ENTER OR COMPLETE AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT" CRITERION FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(B)(III)(VIII) AND FOR "REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO COMPLETE AN EDUCATION PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT" CRITERION FOR IN-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(C)(IV)(VII).

State policy defers to local policy on the definition of "requires additional assistance to complete and educational program, or to secure and hold employment."

5. INCLUDE THE STATE DEFINITION, AS DEFINED IN LAW, FOR NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL AND ATTENDING SCHOOL AS SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(B)(I) AND SECTION 129(A)(1)(C)(I). IF STATE LAW DOES NOT DEFINE "NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL" OR "ATTENDING SCHOOL" INDICATE THAT IS THE CASE.

Puerto Rico compulsory education laws require children between the ages of 6 and 16 to attend school. However, for purposes of WIOA, the Workforce Development Program does not consider providers of Adult Education under title II of WIOA, YouthBuild programs, and Job Corps programs to be schools. Therefore, WIOA youth programs may consider a youth to be "not attending school" for purposes of WIOA youth program eligibility if he/she is attending Adult Education provided under title II of WIOA, YouthBuild, or Job Corps. It is the policy of the WDP that student attendance at a post–secondary institution qualifies as "attending school."

State policy defines "alternative education" as options for students who are at risk of dropping out of high school to remain engaged in an alternative–learning environment that focuses on their particular skills, abilities, and learning styles.

6. IF NOT USING THE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT DEFINITION CONTAINED IN WIOA SECTION 3(5)(B), INCLUDE THE SPECIFIC STATE DEFINITION.

Puerto Rico is using the basic skills deficient definition as contained in WIOA sec. 3(5). The term "basic skills deficient" means a youth that: has English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8th grade level on a generally accepted standardized test; or is unable to compute or solve problems, read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society.

D. SINGLE-AREA STATE REQUIREMENTS

In States where there is only one local workforce investment area, the governor serves as both the State and local chief elected official. In such cases, the State must submit any information required in the local plan (WIOA section 106(d)(2)). States with a single workforce area must also include:

1. ANY COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD THAT REPRESENT DISAGREEMENT WITH THE PLAN. (WIOA SECTION 108(D)(3).)

2. THE ENTITY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISBURSAL OF GRANT FUNDS, AS DETERMINED BY THE GOVERNOR, IF DIFFERENT FROM THAT FOR THE STATE. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(15).)

3. THE TYPE AND AVAILABILITY OF WIOA TITLE I YOUTH ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING AN IDENTIFICATION OF SUCCESSFUL PROVIDERS OF SUCH ACTIVITIES. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(9).)

Not applicable.

E. WAIVER REQUESTS (OPTIONAL)

States wanting to request waivers as part of their Title I-B Operational Plan must include a waiver plan that includes the following information for each waiver requested:

1. IDENTIFIES THE STATUTORY OR REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS FOR WHICH A WAIVER IS REQUESTED AND THE GOALS THAT THE STATE OR LOCAL AREA, AS APPROPRIATE, INTENDS TO ACHIEVE AS A RESULT OF THE WAIVER AND HOW THOSE GOALS RELATE TO THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

2. DESCRIBES THE ACTIONS THAT THE STATE OR LOCAL AREA, AS APPROPRIATE, HAS UNDERTAKEN TO REMOVE STATE OR LOCAL STATUTORY OR REGULATORY BARRIERS;

3. DESCRIBES THE GOALS OF THE WAIVER AND THE EXPECTED PROGRAMMATIC OUTCOMES IF THE REQUEST IS GRANTED;

4. DESCRIBES HOW THE WAIVER WILL ALIGN WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S POLICY PRIORITIES, SUCH AS:

A. SUPPORTING EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT;
B. CONNECTING EDUCATION AND TRAINING STRATEGIES;
C. SUPPORTING WORK-BASED LEARNING;
D. IMPROVING JOB AND CAREER RESULTS, AND
E. OTHER GUIDANCE ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT.

5. DESCRIBES THE INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER, INCLUDING HOW THE WAIVER WILL IMPACT SERVICES FOR DISADVANTAGED POPULATIONS OR INDIVIDUALS WITH MULTIPLE BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT; AND

6. DESCRIBES THE PROCESS USED TO:

A. MONITOR THE PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE WAIVER;
B. PROVIDE NOTICE TO ANY LOCAL BOARD AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER;
C. PROVIDE ANY LOCAL BOARD AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER AN OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON THE REQUEST;
D. ENSURE MEANINGFUL PUBLIC COMMENT, INCLUDING COMMENT BY BUSINESS AND ORGANIZED LABOR, ON THE WAIVER.
E. COLLECT AND REPORT INFORMATION ABOUT WAIVER OUTCOMES IN THE STATE'S WIOA ANNUAL REPORT

The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the State seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver;

WAIVER FOR THE PROHIBITION ON USE OF INDIVIDUAL TRAINING ACCOUNTS (ITA'S) FOR YOUTH

The State Board and the WDP, as the State designated entity to support the implementation of WIOA in Puerto Rico, submit this request to waive WIOA Section 129(c)(2) implementing WIOA Title I Youth Program Element, to allow for youth ages 18 to 24, who will be eligible for training services under the adult and dislocated worker programs, to use Individual Training Accounts (ITA) while still enrolled in the Youth program. Section 20 CFR 681.550 stated that in order to enhance individual participant choice in their education and training plans and provide flexibility to service providers, the USDOL allows for the use of WIOA ITAs for out of–school youth (OSY), ages 18 to 24 using WIOA youth funds when appropriate. To the extent possible, in order to enhance their choices, youth participants should be involved in the selection of educational and training activities.

We believe the needs of some older youth can be met more adequately with an additional training option that is more expedient in terms of the time it takes for the service to be available. Unlike younger, in school youth, older youth are one of the most difficult populations to serve because their primary interest lies in obtaining self–sufficient, full time employment. The comprehensive service elements required within the year round youth program sometimes delay access to training and employment because of the procurement requirement.

VI.I–B(e)(1) Identifies the statutory or regulatory requirements for which a waiver is requested and the goals that the State or local area, as appropriate, intends to achieve as a result of the waiver and how those goals relate to the Unified State Plan;

Local areas receive youth with different economic and social barriers to help them achieve their academic or employment goals. These youths present the need for diverse programs services, like counseling, peer coaching, among others, but also aim to continue postsecondary trainings, graduate and achieve industry recognized credentials. Through this waiver, the local areas can combine ITAs with the fourteen Youth Elements prescribed to help some youth in achieving their personal goals.

The purpose is to waive WIOA Section 129(c)(2) which implements WIOA Title I Youth Program Elements and align it with section 20 CFR 681.550, that allows WIOA ITAs for out of–school youth, ages 18 to 24 using WIOA youth funds when appropriate.

VI.I–B(e)(2) Describes the actions that the State or local area, as appropriate, has undertaken to remove State or local statutory or regulatory barriers;

There are no State or local statutory or regulatory barriers for the implementation of the proposed waiver.

VI.I–B(e)(3) Describes the goals of the waiver and the expected programmatic outcomes if the request is granted;

This waiver will enhance out–of–school youth (OSY) participants' choice in their education and training plans and provide flexibility to service providers. Also, it will help local areas by eliminating duplicative paperwork needed for enrolling older youth in both youth and adult formula programs and reinforce WIOA's emphasis on increasing access to and opportunities for workforce investment services for this population. Youth participants will be more involved in the selection of their educational and training activities. In summary, this waiver will expand training options; increase program flexibility; enhance customer choice; and reduce tracking, reporting and paperwork by way of dual enrollment.

The waiver can positively impact all older WIOA eligible youth. These customers will receive the type of services that most closely and quickly meet their individualized needs without unnecessary paperwork, tracking, and delay. Also, it allows the best use of funds by local boards, by not having to direct limited administrative resources to costly and time–consuming competitive procurements process. Training providers will benefit because they will not have to follow two separate processes to provide services to Adults and Dislocated Workers and Older Out–of–School Youth.

VI.I–B(e)(4) Describes how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:

VI.I–B(e)(4)(A) supporting employer engagement;

Out–of–school youths (OSY) completing a credential will increase their hiring opportunities and the employer engagement with the workforce system will be supported by the availability of more trained OSY. Also, the use of ITAs will be aligned with the USDOL priorities for developing Job Driven initiatives, apprenticeship programs, among other initiatives meeting employer needs. The State Board will develop additional policy to reach the outcomes of this waiver request.

VI.I–B(e)(4)(B) connecting education and training strategies;

This waiver will help expand training opportunities for OSY, additional to those available through Title I and Title II of WIOA. The use of ITAs, through an integrated service strategy will help extend training alternatives to the OSY, using eligible training services providers included in the State list. The key characteristics in the OSY are low schooling and lack of occupational skills, credentials and relevant work experiences. With this waiver using the ITA within a combination of services will help OSY to complete their secondary school, take an occupational training and obtain a recognized credential in the industry.

VI.I–B(e)(4)(C) supporting work–based learning;

With this waiver, using the ITA within a combination of services will help OSY to complete their secondary school, take an occupational training and obtain a recognized credential in the industry.

VI.I–B(e)(4)(D) improving job and career results, and

WIOA places a greater emphasis in OSY exposure to training and early employment experiences, increasing to 75% of youth program funding the allocation for OSY. Through this waiver, OSY participants will be more involved in their educational and training activities with the increase of training options targeting a credential. Job opportunity and employment outcomes will increase as the job seekers have more training and education level. Through this waiver OSY will have more opportunities to reach a credential, and improve their employability and outcomes.

VI.I–B(e)(4)(E) other guidance issued by the Department.

The State level and local areas continually update their delivery of services in order to comply with guidance issued by ETA. To incorporate ETA policies delivered through TEGL and TEN, the State Board will develop additional policy regarding the implementation and outcomes of this waiver request.

VI.I–B(e)(5) Describes the individuals affected by the waiver, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations or individuals with multiple barriers to employment; and

Individuals benefiting from the waiver are youth individuals 18 to 24 years, mainly OSY, who are eligible for training services so they might receive Individual Training Accounts.

VI.I–B(e)(6) Describes the processes used to:

VI.I–B(e)(6)(A) Monitor the progress in implementing the waiver;

The State Board, through the Monitoring Unit of the PRDEDC, will monitor all training activities by the State and local areas, including those delivered through waiver flexibility.

VI.I–B(e)(6)(B) Provide notice to any local board affected by the waiver;

A public announcement was placed in a major circulation newspaper, requesting information and comments from the general community, including local areas. Also, a copy of the request will be sent to the 15 local areas transitioning under WIOA to request comments and recommendations. This waiver was in effect since 2005 in the Puerto Rico workforce system, so that local areas are knowledgeable of prior implementation and outcomes.

VI.I–B(e)(6)(C) Provide any local board affected by the waiver an opportunity to comment on the request;

A public announcement was placed in a major circulation newspaper, requesting information and comments from the general community, including local areas. Also, a copy of the request will be sent to the 15 local areas transitioning under WIOA to request comments and recommendations.

VI.I–B(e)(6)(D) Ensure meaningful public comment, including comment by business and organized labor, on the waiver.

This waiver request is being submitted through WIOA State Unified Plan for PY 2016–20. A public announcement was placed in a major circulation newspaper, requesting information and comments from the general community.

VI.I–B(e)(6)(E) Collect and report information about waiver outcomes in the State's WIOA Annual Report.

This waiver was approved by ETA since 2005, to be used by the Puerto Rico workforce system. Since its inception, the State level required from local areas quarterly reports regarding the use of all the approved waivers. The report includes the number of participants, funds allocation and information related to any situation that would affect the waiver implementation. The waiver outcomes are then reported in the Annual Report required by ETA.

VI.I–B(e)(7) The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the State seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.

Local areas using the waivers approved at the State level have to submit a quarterly report to the State. This report includes the number of participants benefiting from the waiver, funds allocation, as well as a narrative section to express the advantages of the use of the waiver, as well as difficulties that may arise in its implementation. At the end of the program year, this information is used to prepare the narrative section of the Annual Report required by WIOA regulations. The following table shows the results of the waiver for the use of ITAs by older youths and OSY, during the last three program years. It reflects that the number of youth that were assigned the ITAs increased, while the average cost reduced, thus evidencing that local areas have been effective in the use of this waiver.

Statistic Waiver for the Use of ITAs for Older Youth and OSY, PY 2011–2013 (Source: WDP)

2011 2012 2013; Youths 29 66 87; Investment $142,767 $135,083 $116,538; Cost/Participant $4,923 $2,047 $1,340. .

WAIVER FOR THE FOURTEEN PROGRAM ELEMENTS FOR YOUTH BE PROVIDED THROUGH A COMPETITIVE PROCUREMENT PROCESS

The State Board and the WDP, as the State designated entity to support the implementation of WIOA in Puerto Rico, submit this request to waive the application of the proposed rule at 20 CFR 681.400 that establishes the process used to select eligible youth providers, which requires that the fourteen Program Elements for Youth be provided through a competitive procurement process. Procedures for the aforementioned requirements are set forth in section 123 of the Act. The waiver is requested in order to allow for WIOA funded local area staff to directly provide the following three program elements in–house: Supporting Services; Follow–up Services and Work Experience.

The Puerto Rico WIOA system has invested a significant allocation of administrative and operational funds to train staff of the local areas in various service areas including Case Management, Counseling and Orientation, Social Work, among other disciplines, so that they can effectively provide in–house youth program services. In economic terms, in–house services represent a reduction in costs of services when compared to the cost of outsourced services providers. With this system, youths have the advantage of receiving an expanded delivery of services. The service providers might also face hiring limitations whereas in the local areas the services are always available at any time.

VI.I–B(e)(1) Identifies the statutory or regulatory requirements for which a waiver is requested and the goals that the State or local area, as appropriate, intends to achieve as a result of the waiver and how those goals relate to the Unified State Plan;

The purpose is to waive the WIOA regulations at 20 CFR 681.400 that establish the process used to select eligible youth providers, which requires that the fourteen Program Elements for Youth be provided through a competitive procurement process and allow to be provided by local area staff instead. Procedures for the aforementioned requirements are set forth in section 123 of the Act.

VI.I–B(e)(2) Describes the actions that the State or local area, as appropriate, has undertaken to remove State or local statutory or regulatory barriers;

There are no State or local statutory or regulatory barriers for the implementation of the proposed waiver.

VI.I–B(e)(3) Describes the goals of the waiver and the expected programmatic outcomes if the request is granted;

The in–house delivery of youth services in Puerto Rico has demonstrated to be an effective strategy to serve the youth population. We want to extend this waiver to continue improving the delivery of services in One Stop Centers.

VI.I–B(e)(4) Describes how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:

VI.I–B(e)(4)(A) supporting employer engagement;

This strategy is in agreement with the policy established by the USDOL to provide flexibility to the States regarding the investment of WIOA funds and to develop a demand driven system. WIOA establishes a greater emphasis in OSY exposure to training and early employment experiences, increasing to 75 percent of youth program funds the allocation to OSY. Work experiences for OSY are a priority in WIOA regulations and employer engagement to enable youths to participate in real work scenario is crucial to their development in occupational careers. This waiver will allow the allocation of funds for advancing the development of work experiences, support services and follow–up. This approach represents a significant saving for local areas when compared to the same services provided through the competitive approach. More funds mean more participants and employers, and thus more options for servicing the youth. Also, the waiver to allow providing these three services in–house will be in alignment with USDOL priorities like the Job Driven initiative and apprenticeship programs, among other. The State Board will develop additional policy to address the outcomes of this waiver request.

VI.I–B(e)(4)(B) connecting education and training strategies;

The key characteristics of OSY are low schooling, lack of occupational skills, credentials and relevant work experiences. The waiver will help increase the number of youth completing their secondary school, taking an occupational training and obtaining a recognized credential in the industry. The in–house delivery of services allows a more comprehensive youth service strategy, aligning the youth needs of education services to complete secondary school with work experience, and support and follow–up services.

VI.I–B(e)(4)(C) supporting work–based learning;

The waiver will help OSY complete their secondary school, take an occupational training and obtain a recognized credential in the industry.

VI.I–B(e)(4)(D) improving job and career results, and

Through this waiver, youth participants will be more involved in their educational and work activities and the number of participants will be increased. This waiver will target more youth and expand their opportunities to receive work experience, receive support and follow–up services, and improve their employability and employment outcomes.

VI.I–B(e)(4)(E) other guidance issued by the Department.

The State level and local areas continually update their delivery of services in order to comply with guidance issued by ETA. To incorporate ETA policies delivered through TEGL and TEN, the State Board will develop additional policy regarding the implementation and outcomes of this waiver request.

VI.I–B(e)(5) Describes the individuals affected by the waiver, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations or individuals with multiple barriers to employment; and

Individuals benefiting from the waiver are younger youth and older youth that receive the proposed three services through the One Stop Centers.

VI.I–B(e)(6) Describes the processes used to:

VI.I–B(e)(6)(A) Monitor the progress in implementing the waiver;

The State Board, through the Monitoring Unit of the PRDEDC, will monitor all training activities by the State and local areas, including those delivered through waiver flexibility.

VI.I–B(e)(6)(B) Provide notice to any local board affected by the waiver;

A public announcement was placed in a major circulation newspaper, requesting information and comments from the general community, including local areas. Also, a copy of the request will be sent to the 15 local areas transitioning under WIOA to request comments and recommendations. This waiver was in effect since 2005 in the Puerto Rico workforce system, so that local areas are knowledgeable of prior implementation and outcomes.

VI.I–B(e)(6)(C) Provide any local board affected by the waiver an opportunity to comment on the request;

A public announcement was placed in a major circulation newspaper, requesting information and comments from the general community, including local areas. Also, a copy of the request will be sent to the 15 local areas transitioning under WIOA to request comments and recommendations.

VI.I–B(e)(6)(D) Ensure meaningful public comment, including comment by business and organized labor, on the waiver

This waiver is being submitted through WIOA State Unified Plan for PY 2016–20. A public announcement was placed in a major circulation newspaper, requesting information and comments from the general community.

VI.I–B(e)(6)(E) Collect and report information about waiver outcomes in the State's WIOA Annual Report

This waiver was approved by ETA since 2005 to be used by the Puerto Rico workforce system. Since its inception, the State level required from local areas quarterly reports regarding the use of all the approved waivers. The report includes the number of participants, funds allocation and information related to any situation that would affect the waiver implementation. The waiver outcomes are then reported in the Annual Report required by ETA.

VI.I–B(e)(7) The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the State seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.

Local areas using the waivers approved at the State level have to submit a quarterly report to the State. This report includes the number of participants benefiting from the waiver, funds allocation, as well as a narrative section to express the advantages of the use of the waiver, as well as difficulties that may arise in its implementation. At the end of the program year, this information is used to prepare the narrative section of the Annual Report required by WIOA regulations. The following table shows the results of the waiver for the fourteen program elements for youth provided through a competitive procurement process, during the last four program years. It evidences that local areas have been effective in the use of this waiver.

Table VI–4. Waiver for three program elements to be provided for youth through the local areas, PY 2011–2014

Waivers Work experience for youth Follow–up services Support services; Youths; 2011, 1,487 2,767 1,502; 2012, 1,136, 1,199, 1,054; 2013, 1,311, 2,289, 1,025; 2014, 1,275, 2,189, 1,010; Investment ($), 2011, 830,837, 197,895, 547,777; 2012, 568,654, 149,826, 252,991; 2013, 708,021, 287,347, 427,101; 2014, 733,125, 306,460, 398,950; Cost/Participant ($),2011, 303, 129, 784; 2012, 501, 125, 240; 2013, 540, 126, 417; 2014, 575, 140, 395.

TITLE I-B ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

1. The State has implemented a policy to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of training services and individualized career services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients and basic skills deficient; Yes

2. The state has implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist; Yes

3. The state established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for the appointment of local workforce investment board members. Yes

4. The state established written policy and procedures to ensure local workforce investment boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with WIOA section 107(c)(2). Yes

5. Where an alternative entity takes the place of a State Board, the State has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership. Yes

6. The State established a written policy and procedure for how the individuals and entities represented on the State Workforce Development Board help to determine the methods and factors of distribution, and how the state consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the state in determining the distributions. Yes

7. The State will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA section 181(b)(7). Yes

8. The State distributes adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period covered by this plan. Yes

9. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers state laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I. Yes

10. The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report. Yes

11. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under section WIOA 184(a)(3); Yes

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR WAGNER-PEYSER PROGRAM (EMPLOYMENT SERVICES)

All program-specific requirements provided for the WIOA core programs in this section must be addressed for either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

A. EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PROFESSIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT.

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL UTILIZE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF TO ENSURE STAFF IS ABLE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS.

Consistent and strategic investment in staff development reflects Puerto Rico's commitment to integrated workforce services. The Employment Service staff of the PRDOLRH are trained in administering both Employment Service and Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs, enabling customers to receive seamless services geared to facilitate their return to employment. However, for the success of the implementation of WIOA, it is of outmost importance and essential that the skills and competencies of the Wagner Peyser (WP) staff be reviewed and re–engineered. WP staff is the most important asset in the delivery of quality services in a prompt manner.

WP staff at the One Stop Centers is the key to the success of WIOA in the provision of career services to job seekers. For a change to occur, WP staff members will have to understand their new role within the One Stop Centers and why they must work differently, participate in reengineering and capacity building process and ultimately derive pride and satisfaction from successfully meeting customer needs and measurable program goals. This means that a consistent and strategic investment in staff development needs to occur as a reflection of the Puerto Rico's commitment to integrate workforce services.

The WP staff will be subjected to an intensive capacity building effort for them to understand the new challenges and demands that WIOA placed on the workforce delivery system. For this to happen the Employment Service Division (ES) will consult with professionals from the academy in the employment counseling field to better serve our clients. An integral part to this approach is to provide the competencies and skills necessary to the WP staff and to understand the important role that technology plays in provision of career services to job seekers today.

Federal and State Actual Policy

In Puerto Rico, skills and qualifications to provide occupational or employment counseling is regulated by law, and counseling is within this professional field. ES has among its support staff, Occupational Counselors certified in their field with a master's degree as case managers who work directly with different populations seeking employment such as veterans, UI claimants more likely to exhaust their benefits, including UCX and others.

Counseling services were introduced under the WP Act of 1933, with specific guidelines directing that such services were to be provided to people with disabilities. Subsequently, the provision of these services to other groups identified with special needs became something required.

The WIOA states that funds allocated to each State must be used to provide services to job seeking persons, including other services, counseling. Section 102 requires the Unified State Plan to provide dispositions for the promotion and development of employment opportunities for people with disabilities, for their guidance and insertion in the labor market, and for the designation of at least one person in the ES whose functions will effectuate these purposes.

The Economic Crisis: The Impact on the Provisions of Employment Services.

The ES is not the only program to be impacted by the recent economic crisis, not only at State level but at the Federal level as well, with diminishing funding with each passing program year. In the case of ES, this situation has impacted the ability to recruit new staff to provide all required services available under WIOA for career and employment of job seeking persons. Therefore, not all ES local offices have a Career Counselor within its local staff.

It is necessary to train existing staff currently providing direct services to Federally designated high priority populations, such as veterans and eligible spouses, UI claimants more likely to exhaust their benefits, including UCX, and other special target populations identified as in need of career services such as agricultural workers (MSFWs), with the skills and tools necessary to provide such services.

Paradigm Changes: The Employment Specialist

Ways of doing business have changed fast in recent years. Occupational Counseling in the ES must evolve to accommodate this transformation and the implementation of the concept of service delivery through the One–Stop Centers.

The requirements to provide employment counseling services should no longer be based primarily on the formal education of the WP professional staff. A determination regarding the staff ability to provide advice or counseling should be considered and shall include past work experiences, current job requirements, current and past job duties and skills required by State regulators.

According to the National Employment Counselors Association (NECA), one of the traits that separate Employment Counselors from other types of Counselors is the knowledge they have of labor laws and its commitment to protecting the labor rights of citizens. NECA is a division of the American Counseling Association and was founded in 1966 to implement sound practices and to enhance employability and long–term employment interventions. The aim of NECA is to provide the best possible resources for people seeking employment and the professionals who work with these people.

Employment Counseling

Employment counseling is the process by which a WP Professional and the job seeker work together as a group and/or in individual activities, so that the job seeker may obtain better knowledge and understanding about the labor market and a have a more realistic approach when selecting, changing and adapting to a career, profession or a job.

This WP professional has the responsibility of providing direct services to target populations as defined by the USDOL as high priority, such as veterans and eligible spouses, UI claimants more likely to exhaust their benefits, including designated UCX, and other populations in need of career services such as farm workers, with the skills and tools necessary to enable them to achieve their goal of obtaining suitable employment according to their needs, skills and educational level.

In order for Employment Specialists to comply with their responsibility as stated above, at a minimum, it is recommended they attain with the minimum competencies established by NECA listed below in order to provide, in an effective way, all the career services required under WIOA. The following competencies were adopted by NECA to be used in the Workforce Development, in the Public Welfare Reform, School–to–Work, One–Stop Centers, ES and other Employment Counseling Programs:

• Individual Counseling (one to one). Refers to a private session (face to face) between an employment specialist and a job seeker. The main objective is to help the job seeker to explore his current situation with regard to the selection or changing a job or occupation.

• Group Counseling. Refers to the process by which an employment specialist uses the principles and techniques of group dynamics and leadership roles in a continuous and meaningful way to help a job seeker who experience difficulty getting or keeping a job due to work–related attitudes, behaviors or habits. Usually, these group interventions focus on the discussion of a common theme within the rest of the group.

• Counseling Skills. Refers to the ability to establish a relationship of trust, open and useful to each client, accurately interpreting the feelings as well as verbal and nonverbal expressions, and convey that understanding to the client and any other relevant information and necessary assistance. The employment specialist must have the awareness and knowledge of career development theory and the ability to support the job seeker through transitions and facilitate decision–making and goal setting. Must have the ability to recognize the need to refer the job seeker to appropriate resources to eliminate barriers to employment and the ability to obtaining (intake) the necessary and effective information to ensure that the job seeker is fit and able to benefit from the programs available in within the One–Stop Centers.

• Individual and Group Skills Assessment. Refers to the ability to provide a continuous assessment using individual skills and group evaluation and use of formal and informal assessment methods that comply with the regulations of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC); the ability to provide continuous assessment, individual and group settings, involving the assessment and measurement of customer needs, characteristics, potential, individual differences and self–evaluation; and the ability to recognize the needs and special features of all kinds, for example, minorities, women seeking non–traditional and culturally different occupations, immigrants, the disabled, older workers and people with AIDS.

• Development and Use of Labor Market Information. Refers to the ability to access, understand and interpret the labor market information and job market trends; the ability to develop and use educational, occupational and labor market information to help job seekers in their decision–making process and the formulation of employment and career objectives that lead to self–sufficiency; and the ability to develop and use skills standards.

• Computer Skills. Refers to the ability to apply the principles of employment counseling to the use of the Internet and other online services, including but not limited to testing, job banks (PR.JOBS), job search, preparing and distributing resumes, reports, case management, counseling and maintaining confidentiality of customer data.

• Development and Implementation of an Individual Employment Plan and Case Management. Refers to the ability to help job seekers to develop and implement an appropriate individual employability plan to help them move from their current situation through any necessary service to improve their employability, including training and supporting services into a suitable job. It involves the knowledge of educational resources and training, sources for financial support, community resources and requirements of the local labor market; and the ability to handle cases through placement and retention.

• Placement Skills. Refers to the ability to identify and communicate an understanding of employers staffing needs to develop effective job development contacts and help the job seeker to present

his/her qualifications in relation to the employer's needs; the ability to teach job search skills and for job development; the ability to help the job seeker in making decisions related to the work environment in which he/she could be more successful; and the ability to advocate for employment and career development of special target groups.

• Community Relations Skills. Refers to the ability to help job seekers to get the services needed to address their employment barriers that may interfere with the successful employment and their career goals; the ability to make presentations to community groups and to participate in the working teams of such community groups; the ability to develop information packages; and the ability to associate and establish staff resources with other agencies within the One–Stop Centers.

• Workload Management and Inter–Personal Relationship Skills. Refers to the ability to coordinate all aspects of the Employment Counseling Program as part of a team effort, resulting in a continuous and significant sequence of client services, agency staff, employers and the community; and the ability to operate a comprehensive employment resource center.

• Professional Development Skills. Refers to the ability to develop skills on an individual basis and within the position or profession and demonstrate by example the performance and standards expected of a professional Employment Specialist.

• Ethical and Legal Aspects. Refers to the ability to meet the ethical standards developed by the American Counseling Association; and knowledge of regulations and legislation affecting training and employment, employment services and social reform, such as the EEOC, the Americans with Disabilities Act, professional testing standards, Multicultural Affairs, Family Affairs and one Stop Centers.

The ES is currently exploring with professionals in the field of Employment Counseling ways to develop workshops and training courses that will provide the skills and competencies described above to WP professional staff who serves as Employment Specialists so that they are familiar with the expectations of an employment specialist and can provide a quality experience for job seekers visiting the One–Stop Centers.

Our goal is to have a complete structured training curriculum aligned with the NECA competencies mentioned above to equip them with the necessary tools to provide high–quality services to both jobseekers and business such as:

• Intensive interviewing techniques

• Administering career assessments

• Accessing and interpreting labor market information

• Customized service strategies for employers and jobseekers

• Identifying the potential need for soft skills and skills gap training

• Developing workforce partnerships

• Identifying available supportive services

• Résumé writing expertise

• Counseling to address barriers to employment and to assist with career selection

• Strategies for business recruitment events

• Methodologies to connect qualified jobseekers with employers

• Providing workforce statistics and prevailing industry wages

• Guidance on employment laws as it relates to the workplace • UI the WOTC, and other workforce services

• Access to customer service training to enhance services to jobseekers and businesses

In addition to the competencies mentioned above, other staff development activities may include:

• Comprehensive online resources on PRDOLHR's website at www.trabajo.pr.gov

• Comprehensive training on external online resources such as mynextstep.org and myskillsmyfuture.org

• Job shadowing for new staff at State and local offices

• Active participation in NASWA

• Ongoing assessment of PRDOLHR and partner staff training needs by local PRDOLHR career center managers

• Participation on Local Boards to keep abreast of information on local, State, and national issues

2. DESCRIBE STRATEGIES DEVELOPED TO SUPPORT TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACROSS CORE PROGRAMS AND THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE PROGRAM, AND THE TRAINING PROVIDED FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND WIOA STAFF ON IDENTIFICATION OF UI ELIGIBILITY ISSUES AND REFERRAL TO UI STAFF FOR ADJUDICATION.

Cross Training

Aware of the need to offer better services, the ES provides cross training, technical assistance and support to all core partners staff who serve local job seekers and employers to ensure that program partners are highly engaged in local and State workforce partnerships that allow for the constant exchange of information on core programs, UI legislation, and available programs and to integrate these programs into the customer flow within the One–Stop Centers. Cross training is provided on services provided by WP to veterans, UI claimants, farm workers and job seekers in general. Also, cross training is provided in areas such as the WP Complaint System, the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS), and the refocusing of the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) and the impact it has on the provision of services by WIOA partners, UI policies, rules, procedures, detection addressing and resolution of UI issues affecting UI eligibility. Comprehensive training will be

provided to career center staff managing the UI claims process and an overview of the UI process will be available also to WIOA and other workforce partners.

Identification of Unemployment Insurance (UI) Eligibility Issues

Under the grant requirements for the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment Program (RESEA), a complete review of UI eligibility is performed under the Eligibility Review Program (ERP). Section 303(a)(1) of the Social Security Act (SSA) requires "management methods ...as it is determined by the US Secretary of Labor as reasonable to ensure full payment of unemployment compensation at the due date." This means that PRDOLHR have suitable methods of administration for eligibility information by ES in order to quickly determine the eligibility of a UI claimant based on that information. To ensure that ES meets the needs of UI, policies and procedures are in place to define and timely provide the required information relating to the requirements regarding participation or availability of a claimant.

UI claimants referred to RESEA will be subjected to this eligibility review as part of their participation in RESEA. However, all UI claimants not referred to RESEA and receiving of employment services will be subjected to the same eligibility review by WP staff as part of the initial assessment. These services can only be provided through the State's merit staff. WP staff or RESEA staff will revise WP/RESEA participants who have completed appraisal interviews and will refer them to UI for adjudication as appropriate. In addition, UI experienced staff will be co–located within the One Stop Centers to address UI issues, questions and concerns.

Workforce partners will have access to select data elements, such as customer contact information and work history from the WP program. By sharing this data between workforce partners WP will assist other WIOA partners such as Title I programs in providing comprehensive, unduplicated services while eliminating unnecessary trips or contacts for the customer.

B. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE WILL PROVIDE INFORMATION AND MEANINGFUL ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUALS REQUESTING ASSISTANCE IN FILING A CLAIM FOR UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION THROUGH ONE-STOP CENTERS, AS REQUIRED BY WIOA AS A CAREER SERVICE.

Every individual will have the ability to file a UI claim at each and every comprehensive One–Stop Center. In order to provide this access and the meaningful assistance to individuals requesting assistance in filing a claim for unemployment compensation through the One–Stop Centers, assistance will be assured through:

• UI orientation provided to every new claimant explaining the full range of workforce services available to help them return to work

• Online access via desempleo.trabajo.pr.gov/reclamantes/ where customers can file electronically from career centers, home, libraries or any other Internet portal

• Dedicated, experienced UI staff at every One–Stop comprehensive center

• Fully staffed resource centers at all career centers, including Internet access, copies, phones, fax and resource libraries

• Access points at One–Stop Centers and career centers across the State

• An opportunity for each claimant to access in–person reemployment services as they come to career centers and One–Stop Centers to complete the UI filing process

• Access to professional and experienced staff for the preparation of resumes, registration in ES as a requirement for claimants and job matching services

• The availability of staff, technology, and written materials in a variety of languages to meet the needs of all customers

• Fully accessible services, online and in person, to serve any customer with a disability • Joint participation of UI staff with other workforce partners in large layoff events

• Daily referrals of customers from workforce partners to UI specialists to ensure that customers have access to all benefits to which they are entitled.

C. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S STRATEGY FOR PROVIDING REEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE TO UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CLAIMANTS AND OTHER UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS.

The PRDOLHR is positioned, along other partner staff, to provide comprehensive employment and placement services to jobseekers who are in most in need and face multiple barriers to reemployment. All employment and placement services are available to all job seekers walking in to One–Stop Centers as long they are eligible to work in the United States including job seekers looking for a better career opportunity; individuals who are unemployed and looking for a new job; and job seekers looking for a job for the first time in their lives. All WP services are staff assisted services although any job seeker has access to other services provided by the center such as self–assisted services, group presentation and customized one–on–one assistance. Jobseekers who are in need of more specialized services according to their needs (e.g., veterans, migrant and seasonal farmworkers, UI claimants) received more in–depth career services to further their career goals.

Puerto Rico law requires all UI recipients to register with the ES. Reemployment Services (RES) arises as an amendment to the Social Security Act (SSA), PL 103–152, Unemployment Compensation Act Amendments of November 24, 1993. This law added Sections 303(a) (10) and 303(j) to SSA. Profiling is designed to assist UI claimants who may be unlikely to find employment before their benefits are exhausted. Accordingly, the PRDOLHR runs every week its mandated federal profiling model when UI claimants receive their first payment, at which time selected claimants are notified in writing of the requirements for RES and the varied services available to them. These services include an assessment of skills relative to available jobs; workshops on effective job search, interviewing techniques and résumé development; an overview of multiple self–service employment resources; detailed labor market information related to growth occupations and industries, and wage surveys to assist with decision making; and direct referrals to job training, educational and supportive service opportunities in the community. However, RES are generally available to all job seekers.

The workload is managed at central level for all career centers and has been set at a threshold of 36 UI claimants per week per career center. We found this is the ideal threshold to ensure that RES can be delivered. All claimants identified by the profiling model system are mandated to participate in required services and shall complete a comprehensive objective assessment and a reemployment plan.

RESEA Program

The PRDOLHR operates RESEA in 13 ES local offices, three of them currently located within One–Stop Centers. The goal is to have all ES local offices located within the career centers by June 30, 2016 to comply with the WIOA mandate. The RESEA program is of high priority for the USDOL, the ETA and the PRDOLHR. Several studies have found that when attention is placed on the job search efforts of UI claimants and their reemployment needs, these translate into fewer erroneous payments and shorter claim periods. WPRS/RESEA initiatives seek to address both priorities.

The new approach of the RESEA program takes into consideration other UI claimants who are in need of these services including UCX claimants. Puerto Rico does not currently house U.S. military bases except headquarters for the Reserve and the National Guard. Therefore, UCX claimants are ex–servicemen who return to the civil life through military bases outside Puerto Rico. However, UCX claimants represent a small number when compared to the regular UI claimants. Nevertheless, these claimants are considered as in need of intensive reemployment services.

The new RESEA targets UI claimants who are profiled and are most likely to exhaust their weekly benefits, including UCX. This new expansion allows the PRDOLHR to serve more customers across the Island and will allow us to evaluate the impact it has on delivering the career services to a significant number of veterans with workforce challenges. Since RESEA took over WPRS on those career centers where RESEA operates, the new redesign will increase the number of career centers delivering RESEA as ES is being integrated into the career centers during the first two quarters of 2016.

The provision of RES for UI claimants has a high relevance during recessions and periods of high unemployment. As a result, ES will focus its attention and resources on better integration and UI service connection with the services provided through the One–Stop Centers under WIOA. The goal is to ensure that UI seekers have access to the full range of employment services and training through the One–Stop Centers while ensuring that claimants meet the requirements for active participation in the job search as a condition to continue receiving benefits.

UI claimants referred to RESEA and other unemployed individuals are subjected to an assessment of eligibility and the corresponding referral to the Adjudication Unit if any potential situation is identified that needs to be attended; and the requirement for each claimant to report to a One–Stop Center to get the services listed below:

• An orientation about the services available through the One–Stop Centers with particular emphasis on access to information available on the labor market and careers, delivery of labor market information unique to the experience, skills and desired occupation of the claimant

• Assistance in the use of basic services available and self–help offered within the One–Stop Centers through the use resources room or virtually (Internet).

• Registry in the State Job Bank (PR.JOBS)

• An initial assessment, if claimant do not have a specific date to return to work, preferably with an Employment Counselor to identify strengths, weaknesses and barriers after the claimant receives the initial orientation by the RESEA staff

• Referrals to appropriate services offered by other partners within the One–Stop Centers such as self–assessment, information on education and training, interviewing techniques, networking, occupational exploration, and online resources, among other services

• Development of and Individual Reemployment Plan which should include job search activities, appropriate topics such as preparing resumes and strategies workshops, job search and/or authorized training

D. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE W-P FUNDS TO SUPPORT UI CLAIMANTS, AND THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN W-P AND UI, AS APPROPRIATE, INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:

1. COORDINATION OF AND PROVISION OF LABOR EXCHANGE SERVICES FOR UI CLAIMANTS AS REQUIRED BY THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT;

The WP Labor Exchange System is administered by the PRDOLHR. Since this labor exchange system resides in SIAC, a web based software application, UI staff needs to login into the system to access all ES services provided to UI claimants including job referrals, referrals to training or other WIOA services and other information as needed. WP staff is funded by WP funds in accordance to federal regulations and circulars to the allowable benefiting fund source. Other WP staff is funded according to the program they are assigned to (e.g., RESEA, JVSG, WOTC, ALC).

All One–Stop Centers have a resource center were job seekers can access labor market information and other resources for their employment needs. Resources available to job seekers includes the PRDOLHR Job Bank, labor market information, O*Net resources, USDOL available online tools such as MyNextMove and MySkillsMyFuture, use of fax and copier machines, telephone, resume writing and development, career exploration, among other services. These services are available to all ES job seekers including UI claimants.

All ES employment and placement services are staff assisted services provided by State merit staff to more than 100,000 job seekers annually. Other services are provided through the career centers resource areas. Although a great number of employers post their job opportunities directly with the ES, a great number use the PRDOLHR Job Banks, which lists approximately 90,000 available jobs on a daily basis. This tool is independent of the ES Labor Exchange System. We project to connect this tool to SIAC and be able to download all job orders from PR.JOBS on a daily basis into SIAC and vice versa.

2. REGISTRATION OF UI CLAIMANTS WITH THE STATE'S EMPLOYMENT SERVICE IF REQUIRED BY STATE LAW;

UI claimants are required by law to register with the ES to be eligible to receive UI compensation. However, the registration process is not integrated in the claims application process since the UI system (SABEN) and the ES Labor Exchange (SIAC) does not interchange information with each other. Both systems are operated by different agencies and the fact the Puerto Rico UI law imposes strict restrictions to secure privacy and share data with other users has been a barrier.

Once UI claimants filed their claim, either in person, by phone or by Internet, they are required to visit the nearest career center and register with ES. The claimant has the burden to register with ES. Once registered, a white card (Form 506) is given to the individual as proof of his/her registration in ES. The card has a unique customer ID assigned by SIAC in order to be valid. Every time the claimant need to visit the career center for UI services he/she needs to present the card to the UI representative as an evidence of his/her registration in ES since UI representatives do not have access to the SIAC system.

Currently there is no plan to seamlessly integrate ES registration into the UI claim filing process until the issue of privacy and sharing of data between UI and ES is resolved.

3. ADMINISTRATION OF THE WORK TEST FOR THE STATE UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION SYSTEM, INCLUDING MAKING ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENTS (FOR REFERRAL TO UI ADJUDICATION, IF NEEDED), AND PROVIDING JOB FINDING AND PLACEMENT SERVICES FOR UI CLAIMANTS; AND

UI claimants in Puerto Rico receiving UI benefits must be able and available to work as required by law and be actively seeking full–time work. Amendments to the UI law in Puerto Rico established since 2012 that if an individual earned the majority of wages in the base period used to establish the claim from part–time work, the individual would be allowed to restrict their work search to part–time and can reject a full–time job offer. The only exceptions to the work search requirements in Puerto Rico are for the following:

• Individuals with a job attachment, which would include individuals for whom their employer has filed a “partial” unemployment claim for them or those individuals with a definite recall to work (the law does not establish a predetermined period of time to return to work)

• Union members in good standing

• Individuals who are approved and enrolled in an approved training program by the Director of the Bureau of Employment Security

In Puerto Rico, weekly UI benefit certification Form 566 includes a question about whether the individuals are able, available, and actively seeking employment. A negative response places an issue on the certification, which cannot be removed until a statement is obtained regarding availability. If an issue is determined, a benefits eligibility review is performed by the UI benefits interview specialist or claims examiner and a determination released, if in order. During the initial claims filing application, individuals are asked questions regarding their availability. Negative responses require adjudication of the potential availability issue by PRDOLHR’s UI claims examiners or services specialists.

Individuals referred to the RESEA program must report to their initial RESEA appointment, and must participate in all subsequent in–person and telephone appointments. During the in–person appointments, a UI eligibility review is performed and the RESEA interviewer question the individuals about availability for work and any barriers to work they may be facing during all contacts. During all eligibility reviews (i.e., UI, RESEA), staff review the individual’s work search, discuss the individual’s availability, and any barriers to work.

Employers and anonymous individuals can report suspected UI fraud to the PRDOLHR’s UI Division. This can include employers reporting individuals who do not report for interviews, individuals who are incarcerated, or are otherwise not able, available, and/or actively seeking work.

ES Placement Officials staff have regular contact with employers and receive notice when individuals fail to report to an interview or refuse work – resulting in an issue on the individual’s claim. In the event a potential issue is discovered from any source, an unemployment benefits interview is scheduled with a claims examiner. If the individual is not able, available, and actively seeking work (and is not exempted from work search), an appropriate determination regarding UI benefits is released.

4. PROVISION OF REFERRALS TO AND APPLICATION ASSISTANCE FOR TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES.

Puerto Rico is experiencing for the first time since the inception of WIA, and now WIOA, the integration process of WP into the One–Stop Centers. It is of utmost importance to PRDOLHR to coordinate the integration of service delivery, a primary goal under WIOA. This will bring together the core programs to provide the whole range of services in a seamlessly integrated and coordinated manner to individuals seeking services at the career centers. These will be providing information to job seekers on community resources, labor market information, GED, occupational training, OJT, and support services that make training possible to enhance an individual's ability to return to work. The network will work as the "front door" to the workforce system. WP staff from career centers will assume their functional roles in the workflow having the responsibility to identify job seekers' needs, assist them with UI, employment and reemployment assistance, trade services, automated resources, workshops and referrals to more intensive services such as training, which are provided by WIOA through local boards, and other partners.

E. AGRICULTURAL OUTREACH PLAN (AOP). EACH STATE AGENCY MUST DEVELOP AN AOP EVERY FOUR YEARS AS PART OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN REQUIRED UNDER SECTIONS 102 OR 103 OF WIOA. THE AOP MUST INCLUDE--

1. ASSESSMENT OF NEED

Provide an assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers in the area based on past and projected agricultural and farmworker activity in the State. Such needs may include but are not limited to: employment, training, and housing.

Under WP, as amended by WIOA, the PRDOLHR has the responsibility to provide services to Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFW) on a basis that is qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportionate to services provided to non–MSFWs. It has long been acknowledged that MSFWs encountered significant barriers to complete basic educational objectives and to find sustainable employment that meets their economic needs and aid them in raising their families. These barriers include transportation problems, language barrier (English proficiency) and exposure to workplace hazards. The PRDOLHR will continue its commitment in assisting MSFWs to overcome these problems. WP services such as job search assistance, counseling, testing and referral services, including the wide range of training services available under WIOA and the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) are available to all MSFWs.

As required in WP regulations at 20 CFR 653.107, an Agricultural Annual Outreach Plan (AOP) is required to be submitted on an annual basis. Therefore, we are including the AOP for PY 2016 as part of the Unified State Plan required under WIOA. The plan describes strategies on how MSFWs who are not being reached by normal intake activities conducted by employment service local offices are to be contacted. The WP Act, as amended by WIOA, also requires that the activities planned to provide the full range of employment and training services to the agricultural community, both MSFWs and agricultural employers, must be provided within the One–Stop Centers network. This requires specific actions to provide MSFWs with the wide range of services available to non–MSFW in an equitable manner according to the Charles R. Richey Order of 1973 regarding violations of civil rights to MSFWs.

Historically, Puerto Rico had been designated a significant MSFW State. MSFW–significant States are those with the highest number of MSFW, based on the total number of MSFW participants in the WP program as reported in the Labor Exchange Reporting System (LERS) 9002A report.

A. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY IN THE STATE MEANS: 1) IDENTIFYING THE TOP FIVE LABOR-INTENSIVE CROPS, THE MONTHS OF HEAVY ACTIVITY, AND THE GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF PRIME ACTIVITY; 2) SUMMARIZE THE AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS' NEEDS IN THE STATE (I.E. ARE THEY PREDOMINANTLY HIRING LOCAL OR FOREIGN WORKERS, ARE THEY EXPRESSING THAT THERE IS A SCARCITY IN THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE); AND 3) IDENTIFYING ANY ECONOMIC, NATURAL, OR OTHER FACTORS THAT ARE AFFECTING AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE OR ANY PROJECTED FACTORS THAT WILL AFFECT AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE.

VI-WP.E.1.A. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY IN THE STATE MEANS: L) IDENTIFYING THE TOP FIVE LABOR-INTENSIVE CROPS, THE MONTHS OF HEAVY ACTIVITY,

AND THE GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF PRIME ACTIVITY: 2) SUMMARIZE THE AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS' NEEDS IN THE STATE (I.E. ARE THEY PREDOMINANTLY HIRING LOCAL OR FOREIGN WORKERS, ARE THEY EXPRESSING THAT THERE IS A SCARCITY IN THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE); AND 3) IDENTIFYING ANY ECONOMIC, NATURAL, OR OTHER FACTORS THAT ARE AFFECTING AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE OR ANY PROJECTED FACTORS THAT WILL AFFECT AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE. PUERTO RICO PROVIDED A RESPONSE TO THIS ELEMENT; HOWEVER, IT DID NOT ADDRESS THE MONTHS OF HEAVY ACTIVITY FOR ALL OF THE LABOR-INTENSIVE CROPS.

Puerto Rico has 584,988 acres of cropland, with a total value of agriculture sales at approximately $548 millions. Agriculture is Puerto Rico's oldest industry and will continue to be a significant economic driver for the next four years in most of the Island's regions. According to the 2012 USDA Agricultural Census, the agriculture industry in Puerto Rico is responsible for approximately 30,122 jobs on a permanent or temporary basis.

As of November 2015, the total number of agricultural workers (not seasonally adjusted) was of 21,000, according to PRDOLHR's statistics. The agricultural sector experienced an increase in total workers in November 2015 with respect to November 2014 of 2,000 workers. If this trend continues in the following years, we can see an increase of workers mainly due to the government's agricultural initiatives described below to have agriculture come back like the sugar cane crops, rice production in Guánica and the expansion of land for the production of coffee.

The coffee industry remains among the top ten agricultural activities in order of economic importance in Puerto Rico. Growing coffee represents one of the major contributions to the Puerto Rico's economy, one of its main businesses and a way of life for much of the population of the central area of the Island. In Puerto Rico, there are about 10,000 coffee farmers, of whom the vast majority are small and medium producers. Coffee growers are distributed in 22 municipalities in the central west region. The main municipalities that make up the production area of coffee are: Adjuntas, Jayuya, Lares, San Sebastian, Añasco, Guayanilla, Mayagüez, Orocovis, Ponce, San Germán, Ciales, Las Marías, Maricao, Utuado, Juana Diaz, Moca, Peñuelas, Villalba, Sabana Grande and Yauco. There are approximately 88 processors and 56 roasters. Puerto Rico Coffee Roasters controls over 80% of the coffee market in Puerto Rico.

The year 2013 marked a shift in the production of coffee. Coffee farmers produced about 80,000 pounds of coffee in the 2013 harvest, which represented only a third of the local consumption, as reported by the Puerto Rico's Secretary of Agriculture. Production in previous years has fluctuated between 105,000 to 150,000 pounds, according to Department of Agriculture statistics. This situation has since forced to import coffee from countries like Mexico and Dominican Republic to meet local demand. One of the main problems for this is a severe lack of coffee collectors. An estimated 35% of the crop is lost each year because there is no one to collect, causing millions of dollars in losses.

One of the main reasons for the lack of coffee pickers is the low wages paid to them, even in violation of Fair Labor Standard Act provisions. The U.S. Department of Labor/Wage and Hours Division began to dabble in the coffee industry to investigate the payment of at least the Federal or State minimum wage, as appropriate by coffee farmers. In Puerto Rico, the production standard is the coffee bushel, which is paid at around $5.25 to $6.00 a bushel. Many farmers used to pay only for bushels collected and not necessarily guaranteeing the hourly wage of $ 7.25 to workers. Because of this, several coffee farmers have been intervened by the Wage and Hour Division and forced to pay back wages owed to workers. One coffee farmer alone had to pay over $250,000 in back wages. We hope that these actions by the USDOL brought a change to the industry and that

many more workers join the coffee pickers' workforce knowing that the industry will at least guarantee them minimum wage.

In 2014, the coffee industry began to recover and coffee production increased by nearly 15%, being September through December the months of heavy activity for the coffee crop. According to the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture, this was made possible by managing to raise the industry with the planting of 800 additional acres and the recovery of plantations that were abandoned. Agreements have been reached at the Federal level for disregarding income generated in specific agricultural occupations when workers apply for the Nutritional Assistance Program. During this year, nearly 12,000 jobs were generated and the coffee industry represented a gross income of $26.3 million. In 2015, Puerto Rico Coffee Roasters registered all coffee pickers who needed employment, either for supplying their farms or the more than 1,700 coffee farmers around the Island. The coffee roaster committed to produce more than 1 million coffee trees. Through its coffee planting project, it has generated more than 100 jobs and confirmed the recruitment of more than 500 coffee pickers between 2015 and 2016.

Among the achievements of the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture during 2015, is worth highlighting the full sale of the first harvest of rice, which was sold to the PRDE's School Food Service program. The Department plans to soon begin the second harvest of nearly 500 acres to continue supplying the market. A year ago, Puerto Rico started the project for harvesting rice, receiving technical assistance for the first stage from Dominican businessmen who transferred their knowledge. Agronomists from Puerto Rico now manage irrigation, drainage and coordinate studies in the area. So far, they have harvested 1,049,958 pounds and, in the second stage, have reached a yield of 6.387 pounds per acre, which exceeds the performance obtained in the first stage, which was 5.412 pounds per acre. The project progresses along a plan for planting 20 weekly acres, so that continuous production could be guaranteed. In other words, labor-intensive activity occurs every three months. Ninety-nine per cent (99%) of the rice is marketed to serve the school canteens.

Another project is the planting of sugarcane in collaboration with the Puerto Rico Land Authority, PRIDCO and the PRDEDC. They have sown the first 300 acres in the Valley of the Colossus in order to produce seed. During the next few months, they will expand to 1,300 acres and will continue adding on until reaching 20,000 within a four-year period, in the western part of the country. According to the Department of Agriculture, the production of sugarcane could be supplying 65% of molasses consumed on the Island for the production of rum. The project will expand in the Valley of Colossus in Aguada and crops will be initiated in the Lajas Valley, specifically in the town of Guánica. With this expansion, the production of sugarcane is expected to meet the goal of planting 1,000 acres set for this year. Once the seed is planted, it takes about seven months to harvest the sugarcane. Since it can be harvested at any time of the year, it is not possible to specify certain months as being the labor-intensive period for this crop.

In a joint effort with the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture, a local supermarket consortium reaffirmed its commitment to local farmers by collaborating in the production of pumpkins. This harvest is taking place in the municipality of Santa Isabel. Under its corporate platform for economic development of Puerto Rico, the supermarkets made the commitment to purchase 175,000 pounds of pumpkins, representing about 20% of the total production of this fruit on the Island. According to the Department of Agriculture, pumpkins are a product that is available all year round.

Additionally, training seminars for agronomists and farmers have begun as part of a collaboration agreement with a producer to enable growing iceberg lettuce and encourage the adoption of a model of cooperation and development among small farmers in the mountainous central area of Puerto

Rico. The project has the support of the Syngentam Foundation, the Agricultural Experimental Station network and the PRDCR. It seeks to substitute imports and strengthen local production by adopting sustainability models to afford farmers and their families, opportunities for new income and employment.

In addition to coffee, rice and sugarcane, Puerto Rico produces a vast array of other agricultural commodities that range from plantains to other minor fruits and vegetables (tomatoes, corn, pumpkins, cucumbers and melons). The Southern region of the Island is the leading area for conventional vegetable crops. Santa Isabel is the leading municipality in the region in terms of acres of vegetables harvested. It houses the largest tomato grower on the Island, generating approximately 400 to 600 jobs per season. Most vegetables are exported, accounting for 70% of the total vegetable harvest.

Farmers mainly plant pumpkin, cucumber and watermelon, which taken together account for 65% of all vegetable and fruit crops. These three crops are seeded at all times and throughout the year. Guánica is the second largest region although everything depends on the crops. For example, in 2010, Guánica was number one in onion production, for the first time in history in Puerto Rico, and is now becoming a rice producer in the region.

The consumption of tomatoes in Puerto Rico accounts for 500,000 hundredweights per year; however, this is not indicative that production supplies all of Puerto Rico's need for this vegetable. Land preparation, planting, irrigating, and harvesting are ongoing activities. Hence, agricultural employment occurs at numerous locations and at any time during the year. Since agricultural activity covers the entire Island, employment opportunities for farm workers are available year round. Most of the agricultural activities occur in the central, western and southern regions of the Island. March and December are the months of labor intensive harvesting for tomatoes.

Although Puerto Rico has been designated as an agricultural supply State, many workers will continue to face substantial challenges in obtaining agricultural jobs in the United States to meet employer's needs due to discrimination and barriers posed by H-2A employers and, specifically, those requiring an increase in job experience for most of the crops. This situation makes it difficult for local workers to apply for these jobs and opens the door for employers to hire alien or non-US-citizen workers. However, the State Monitor Advocate is continuously advocating and acting on behalf of these MSFWs by coordinating efforts with different enforcing Federal agencies to identify unscrupulous H-2A employers who continuously violate H-2A, Wagner-Peyser and labor related laws.

B. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS MEANS SUMMARIZING MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARM WORKER (MSFW) CHARACTERISTICS (INCLUDING IF THEY ARE PREDOMINANTLY FROM CERTAIN COUNTRIES, WHAT LANGUAGE(S) THEY SPEAK, THE APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF MSFWS IN THE STATE DURING PEAK SEASON AND DURING LOW SEASON, AND WHETHER THEY TEND TO BE MIGRANT, SEASONAL, OR YEAR-ROUND FARMWORKERS). THIS INFORMATION MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT DATA SUPPLIED BY WIOA SECTION 167 NATIONAL FARMWORKER JOBS PROGRAM (NFJP) GRANTEES, OTHER MSFW ORGANIZATIONS, EMPLOYER ORGANIZATIONS, AND STATE AND/OR FEDERAL AGENCY DATA SOURCES SUCH AS THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (DOL) EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION.

VI-WP.E.1.B. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS MEANS SUMMARIZING MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARM WORKER (MSFW) CHARACTERISTICS (INCLUDING IF THEY ARE PREDOMINANTLY FROM CERTAIN COUNTRIES. WHAT LANGUAGE(S) THEY SPEAK, THE APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF MSFWS IN THE STATE DURING PEAK SEASON AND DURING LOW SEASON, AND WHETHER THEY TEND TO BE MIGRANT, SEASONAL, OR YEAR-ROUND FARMWORKERS). PUERTO RICO'S RESPONSE LACKED ADEQUATE DETAIL IN ITS ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS IN THE TERRITORY.

The Employment Service has been delivering a full spectrum of services to Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers for decades in Puerto Rico to help them confront and overcome their barriers to employment. Farm workers reside in remote and sometimes inaccessible locations in Puerto Rico. This population is amongst the poorest in the entire United States. The Employment Service has developed different strategies to better serve this population to meet their employment and training needs.

The Outreach Plan aims to serve primarily the farm worker population that lives and works in the remote areas where agriculture is the predominant job. On these areas, farm workers are employed in planting and harvesting coffee, pineapple, tomatoes, corn, watermelon, papaya, bananas, plantains, mangoes and oranges. The harvest season for these crops may last from three to six full months. This seasonal work does not allow for stable employment and a permanent paycheck. In many instances, this employment is further dependent on weather conditions. According to Trading Economics, this industry factors heavily in the Island's current unemployment rate.

In Puerto Rico, contrary to mainland United States, the agricultural workforce consists mainly of local farm workers. Foreign workers are non-existent and this condition is expected to continue for the years to come since the requirements, regulations and laws governing the recruitment and hiring of foreign workers pose a heavy economic burden to the local agricultural employers, making impossible for most of them to make use of the Agricultural Recruitment System established by the USDOL. The language represents another barrier to employment. Spanish is the predominant language among workers, which poses a barrier to employment as emerging agricultural employers in the United States are requiring a knowledge of Basic English as a requirement for employment due to security concerns.

Total workforce in Puerto Rico is calculated to be near 30,000 farm workers. In the coffee industry alone, near 20,000 workers were hired to work during the coffee peak season (September to December). Data for the number of workers in the other crops was not available.

For over 50 years, the Employment Service has been serving the farm worker population. From the 1960s to the 1980s, a large amount of workers migrated to the United States to plant and harvest crops, specifically in the tobacco industry. Since then, the amount of workers migrating to the mainland has decreased over the years. The population of farm workers in Puerto Rico is predominantly seasonal and those who migrate to work in the mainland do so through the Employment Service by applying to the Interstate Job Orders Clearance System.

The Employment Service further serves the migrant population that chooses to go to the United States for the planting and harvesting of crops, from oranges in Florida to field crops in North Dakota and Michigan. Many more still work tobacco in Massachusetts and North Carolina. In addition, food-processing companies use to recruit workers in Puerto Rico through P.L. 87 for turkey and poultry processing.

In the past years, most farmworkers have returned after the season was over. Most migrant farm workers who live and work in many of the same communities as seasonal workers face fewer and more difficult efforts to find wrap around jobs than any time in the past. As Wagner-Peyser is being integrated within the One-Stop Career Centers as a required partner, we will be able to further assist this population by being a facilitator in making services under Title I programs and other partner programs available and accessible to farm workers.

As part of the integration within the One-Stop Delivery System under WIOA, we will be able to:

• Continue to provide high quality employment and placement services to low income farm workers who face multiple barriers.

• Help farm workers develop employability plans

• Work together with the One-Stop Delivery System to provide appropriate services including training when possible.

• Assist in the provision of Outreach services at the place of abode of farm workers.

• Implement ways to co-enroll farm workers with other partner programs like PathStone and Title I that will be beneficial in meeting the employment needs of farm workers.

Farm workers' wages force them below the poverty line, making them individuals economically disadvantaged. In many states, unemployment benefits are inexistent for this population, no sick leave, no paid vacations or health insurance. Farm workers in Puerto Rico face these limitations and additional barriers, including social and physical isolation exacerbated by acute economic situations, educational disadvantage and the lack of or limited means of transportation. These barriers limit their ability to gain access, even to services available at the One-Stop Centers, which in turn requires Outreach to become an integral component of the program design to provide them with the employment and placement services needed at their work sites and/or place of abode.

2. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

The local offices outreach activities must be designed to meet the needs of MSFWs in the State and to locate and contact MSFWs who are not being reached through normal intake activities. Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

Please, see below.

A. CONTACTING FARMWORKERS WHO ARE NOT BEING REACHED BY THE NORMAL INTAKE ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE OFFICES.

Puerto Rico has been designated as a significant MSFW supplier State for a number of States in the mainland USA. As a result, Puerto Rico's One–Stop Centers will operate an Outreach program to locate and contact MSFWs not being reached by regular intake procedures. The lack of Outreach workers in PY 2015 put in risk the compliance with the equity ratio indicators. During the first six months of 2016 efforts will be made to hire Outreach workers for the Ponce, Humacao, Guayama, Coamo and Arecibo career centers, all significant MSFWs centers. Notwithstanding the foregoing, year–round outreach activities will be conducted in career centers to the extent resources are available.

Due to the tropical weather of Puerto Rico, Outreach workers made contacts with MSFWs all year–round and during peak agricultural activity periods, which vary for different crops. Contacts are made at locations where MSFWs live and congregate. Written and oral presentations are provided to MSFWs on services such as, but not limited to:

• Information regarding the full array of services offered in the career centers

• Referral to agricultural, H–2A orders, and non–agricultural employment

• Referral to training

• Referral to supportive services

• Career counseling

• Job development

• Information on the Wagner–Peyser complaint system

• Summaries of farm worker rights (terms and conditions of employment)

When making contacts, Outreach workers obtain permission from the agricultural employers to conduct outreach activities within the limits of the employer's property. During the contact, Outreach workers provide valuable information about services available to them in the career centers and encourage MSFWs to visit the nearest career center for the full range of employment, placement and training services available to them.

In the event MSFWs cannot or do not wish to visit a physical one–stop system location, Outreach staff help the customers complete an application for ES, provide referrals to employment opportunities for which the individuals are qualified, assist them in preparing complaints, or make appointments for needed services. As appropriate, Outreach staff will carry out follow–up contacts with MSFW customers.

The State Monitor Advocate also performs a variety of advocacy activities, including, but not limited to:

• Overseeing the operation and performance of the MSFW complaint system

• Contributing to the State AOP and reviewing the daily reports of outreach workers

• Participating in public meetings throughout the state

• Meeting with farm worker groups and employers to promote the use of the career center services

The State Monitor Advocate also meets and works with other workforce agencies to coordinate services to MSFWs and raised issues, as appropriate, to ensure that the development of new systems and strategies for service delivery will address the needs of MSFW customers.

The State Monitor Advocate conducts onsite reviews at One–Stop Centers, ensuring local workforce systems are in compliance with the designated equity indicators and minimum service levels for MSFWs. The State Monitor Advocate also provides training and technical assistance, as needed, to staff of partner agencies regarding outreach and services to MSFWs, and the ES complaint system.

For PY 2016, we project over 2,000 MSFW contacts over a projected 408 days of outreach, with partnering organizations providing a subtotal of about 1,800 MSFW contacts. With the plan to hire additional staff as Outreach workers for the Ponce, Arecibo, Humacao, Coamo and Guayama centers, we project over 5,000 MSFW contacts over a projected 1,088 days of outreach.

B. PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO OUTREACH WORKERS. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MUST INCLUDE TRAININGS, CONFERENCES, ADDITIONAL RESOURCES, AND INCREASED COLLABORATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS ON TOPICS SUCH AS ONE-STOP CENTER SERVICES (I.E. AVAILABILITY OF REFERRALS TO TRAINING, SUPPORTIVE SERVICES, AND CAREER SERVICES, AS WELL AS SPECIFIC EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES), THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE COMPLAINT SYSTEM, INFORMATION ON THE OTHER ORGANIZATIONS SERVING MSFWS IN THE AREA, AND A BASIC SUMMARY OF FARMWORKER RIGHTS, INCLUDING THEIR RIGHTS WITH RESPECT TO THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT.

For outreach workers to make an efficient job that could be beneficial to farm workers and agricultural employers, they must be trained in all required areas and competencies to comply with 20 CFR 657.103 and be able to:

• Develop strategies and techniques to locate and contact MSFWs in order to provide information for services available at the local One–Stop Centers.

• Use the information of the Labor Market Information to inform MSFWs of specific job openings (agricultural and non–agricultural) available to them. Also, to assist agricultural employers on securing workers and acquiring information on labor market trends.

• Provide the necessary competencies on labor related laws affecting MSFWs such as the Fair Labor Standard Act (FLSA), the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Protection Act (MSPA), Equal

Employment Opportunity Commission, H–2A Regulation, Housing and other State regulations governing MSFWs.

• Assist MSFWs in filling job applications, preparing worker complaints, making appointments and arranging for transportation.

• Provide information about services available through electronic means, and teaching them how to access this information.

• Identify qualified MSFWs seeking employment, using 20 CFR Part 653. Initial and follow–up outreach efforts will be made to provide needed services and assist MSFWs in landing a job or improving employability.

• Contact agricultural and non–agricultural employers, program operators, community or faith–based organization, and education–and–training providers on behalf of MSFWs.

• Solicit jobs, training opportunities and employment related services for MSFWs.

• Provide agricultural and non–agricultural employers with information, services and assistance requests related to labor issues and needs.

• Accept job postings while performing field outreach activities.

• Refer qualified MSFWs from the MSFWs Outreach log and from previous contacts through follow–up activities, if there are job openings for referral.

• Select qualified MSFWs from the MSFWs Outreach log to perform job development activities to enhance MSFW applications by including their additional occupational skills, transferable occupations and matching positions with non–agricultural jobs, when no suitable, agricultural job openings are available for referral.

PRDOLHR is working towards having in place a One–Stop Centers network system to enhance the referral of workers to both agricultural and non–agricultural jobs. Coordinated efforts will continue between the ES, the Wage and Hour Division, OSHA and the State Legal Services Farmworker Division, to provide training to outreach workers and the local WP staff. These efforts will result in highly trained Outreach workers in areas such as agricultural workplace safety information in order to assist and inform MSFWs how to undertake work safety measures.

C. INCREASING OUTREACH WORKER TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACROSS CORE PROGRAMS INCLUDING THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) PROGRAM AND THE TRAINING ON IDENTIFICATION OF UI ELIGIBILITY ISSUES.

To comply with federal regulations, all WP staff is trained in the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS). The training provided important information to staff in the use of the ARS system, to fill the need for workers during harvest season and for other available agricultural jobs. To better serve the needs of agricultural employers, WP merit staff must focus on employer issues. Employer services are planned and implemented based on each career center service delivery plan. To make sure that agricultural employer needs are met, career centers must provide key activities in the agricultural referral process, such as integrating services for agricultural employers and workers; identifying job–

ready workers once they arrive at the work site; and providing employers with labor market information related to their specific industry, such as farm worker rights and support service information, among other services.

The efforts to be provided by Outreach staff will cover those described in 20 CFR 653.107(i–p). These efforts are the minimum required, but staff will be more thorough in their presentation, providing a comprehensive outline of services available in their particular area. The PRDOLHR entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with PathStone to provide a comprehensive outreach approach to MSFWs. The purpose of the MSFW outreach program is to take available services directly to where MSFWs live and work if they are unable to come to the One–Stop Centers. The MSFW program provides the necessary framework for the One–Stop Centers staff to locate, contact, and enhance employability of MSFWs in Puerto Rico. Outreach interviewers provide services at the point of contact or at the One–Stop Centers office. If needed, services which are not available at the local One–Stop Centers, will be provided by the Outreach worker by means of referrals to other WIOA partners, agencies and organizations that provide the needed assistance. All Outreach activities will be funded with Wagner–Peyser funds for those activities managed by the Employment Service. All outreach activities managed by PathStone will be funded through WIOA–167 funds.

Outreach workers staff contact growers during the harvesting seasons to plan for upcoming labor needs. Coordination is made with the growers and with other career centers to match the labor needs of employers with workers qualified to fill the jobs. In line with PRDOLHR's focus on services to business, State merit staff provide Outreach personnel with comprehensive listings of area growers to aid in scheduling visits throughout the agricultural community. PRDOLHR also collaborates with the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture to ensure all resources for growers and agricultural workers are coordinated in a seamless fashion. Additionally, Outreach workers has a strong relationship with the UPR's Agricultural Extension Service/Department of Agriculture regional field staff to collaborate and improve services to agricultural employers and MSFWs.

D. PROVIDING STATE MERIT STAFF OUTREACH WORKERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES TO ENSURE THEY ARE ABLE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS.

20 CFR 653.107(i–p) requires PRDOLHR to operate an Outreach Program to reach farmworkers that for different reasons normally did not reach ES local offices. The PRDOLHR will provide outreach through eight career centers in agriculturally significant areas and continue to reinforce the Outreach program to comply with regulations as required by 20 CFR 653.107. These centers will be part of the State's WIOA One–Stop Centers system, serving as either a comprehensive One–Stop Center or an affiliated One–Stop site. The employment–related needs of MSFWs are of primary importance to the PRDOLHR. These needs will be a service focus for the following seven significant career centers:

Description of Service Area of Career Centers serving MSFW:

Career Center Locations: Municipalities served 1. Arecibo Center: Quebradillas, Camuy, Hatillo, Arecibo, Lares, Utuado 2. Caguas Center: Caguas, Cayey, Cidra, Aguas Buenas 3. Humacao Center: Humacao, San Lorenzo, Maunabo, Patillas, Las Piedras, Yabucoa, Juncos 4. Guayama Center: Guayama, Arroyo, Salinas, 5. Coamo Center: Coamo, Aibonito, Barranquitas, Villalba 6. Ponce Center: Ponce, Adjuntas, Jayuya, Juana Díaz 7. San Germán Center: Las Marías, Maricao, Guanica, Lajas, Peñuelas, Cabo Rojo, Yauco, Sabana Grande 8. Mayaguez Center: Añasco, Mayaguez, Hormigueros, Las Marías

Currently, the PRDOLHR has staff members in the following career centers; Mayaguez, San Germán and Caguas, this last one also serving the Humacao Career Center serving both MSFWs and agriculture business. These three offices have knowledgeable, designated staff prior to and during peak season to assist growers and MSFWs through outreach activities. WP funded positions are used in these offices for both MSFW and agricultural employers' outreach.

Due to economic budget constraints and other events that occurred during PY 2015, Outreach services have received a dramatic impact affecting services to MSFWs in local offices such as Arecibo, Humacao, Ponce and Guayama. Additionally, Wagner–Peyser funds were reduced during the past three years. We have focused in these career centers in order to identify the necessary resources to appoint, within the available budget, Outreach staff needed to provide services to MSFWs and agricultural employers in these centers. Our commitment is to have all significant career centers with the necessary staff to provide the employment–related needs of MSFWs according to 20 CFR 653.111. If authorized, the PRDOLHR will be in a position to increase the number of MSFWs served and provide outreach services to more than half the population of farm workers that at this time cannot be reached.

PROJECTED WORKERS DEDICATED TO OUTREACH TO FARMWORKERS BY SERVICE AREA SERVICE REGION: CAREER CENTERS: NUMBER OF OUTREACH WORKERS ? Northern: Arecibo:1 ? Southern: Ponce, Coamo, Guayama:3 ? Eastern: Caguas, Humacao:2 ? Western: Mayagüez, San Germán:2

Northern Region

This region has the second largest concentration of MSFWs. The mountainous area is known for the production of coffee, specifically in Utuado and Lares. In 2014, the Manatí local office was closed and its staff relocated to Arecibo and Bayamón. This region includes municipalities that when taken together the aggregate number of farm workers exceeds those of the Manatí service area.

Southern Region

The Southern region is well known for the production of vegetable and other minor fruits. With Gargiulo and Pioneer being the main farm employers in the area. Gargiulo is responsible for the employment of over 1,000 workers during the peak season of tomatoes. This local office was responsible in the past for most of the MSFWs Outreach contacts. The Coamo local office is also responsible for the referrals of workers to Gargiulo, Pioneer and several local farm employers in need of workers. A request will be made to hire the human resources needed to serve this region. With the new regionalization under WIOA, the Ponce local office now serves the Adjuntas and Jayuya municipalities that were previously served by the Arecibo local office.

Western Region

This region comprises the population with most MSFWs since this is the region in which the coffee industry is concentrated, specifically in the municipalities of Yauco, Maricao, Las Marías and Sabana Grande. Due to State government downsizing measures, the PRDOLHR moved to make adjustments in its expenditures in 2014. This exercise meant the closure of the San Germán local office. All outreach operations were then transferred to the Mayaguez local office with the designation of an additional Outreach worker. Nevertheless, in 2015, an agreement was entered into with the Major of San German allowing the PRDOLHR to reopen the San German local office and reinstating the Outreach program. Along with the Mayaguez Outreach Worker, both local offices are

responsible to carry out an Outreach Program in the Western region providing services to MSFWs and farm employers. Resources for Outreach in the Western region are sufficient to carry out the program according to 20 CFR 653.107. The Mayaguez local office is a significant MSFW office.

Eastern Region

The Eastern region does not account for a great number of MSFWs and the agricultural activity in this area is at a minimum. With the previous distribution and service approaches, most MSFWs populated areas will be served by Outreach workers once we identify the resources needed. Coordinated efforts will continue between the Employment Service Division, the USDOL Wage and Hour Division, EEOC and OSHA, to provide training to outreach workers and the local Wagner–Peyser staff. These efforts will result in highly trained Outreach workers in areas such as agricultural workplace safety information in order to assist and inform MSFWs how to undertake work safety measures and to provide farm workers with a basic summary of their rights, including their rights with respect to the terms and conditions of employment under MSPA.

E. COORDINATING OUTREACH EFFORTS WITH NFJP GRANTEES AS WELL AS WITH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COMMUNITY SERVICE AGENCIES AND MSFW GROUPS.

An MOU has been entered into with PathStone, an initiative of the State Monitor Advocate in 2013. As the ETA designated grantee for Puerto Rico, PathStone operates the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) and provides career and training services and related assistance for MSFWs. The cooperative agreement will serve to assist in establishing and demonstrating effective outreach coordination, enhance service delivery to MSFWs and increase registration activities between PathStone and significant career centers staff. The partnership provides for the sharing of labor market information, training, supportive services, and job–related resources available to MSFWs. The cooperative agreement will improve mutual capacities and the likelihood of effective customer service, by sharing the responsibilities for this population and displaying an efficient use of available resources.

The primary benefits of the cooperative agreement with PathStone are:

• The information exchange process is streamlined, something that will improve the occurrence and accuracy of shared information.

• Each organization will be better prepared to coordinate actions, including those that may require immediate intervention when serving MSFWs.

• Staff awareness of emerging issues regarding the MSFW community has increased.

• The establishment of a vehicle of communication with the career centers and PathStone to periodically review and assess quality services to MSFWs.

• Reports are shared on the staff hours spent performing MSFW outreach activity.

PathStone already manages to co–locate staff in the Mayaguez Employment Service local office after closing one of their offices in the area. This allows PathStone to leverage the PRDOLHR resources to better serve the MSFWs in the Western area. PathStone provided outreach contacts to

1,750 customers in PY 2015. PathStone contacts will focus on practically all service areas described above.

PathStone also have cooperative agreements with several career centers and community partners focusing on integrated service strategies and resource sharing. Collaborative approaches reduce duplication of effort and ensure that resources are used effectively for the benefit of customers.

PathStone Corporation is also the NFJP housing grantee for Puerto Rico and provides housing support services to MSFWs through rental and utility assistance. The State Monitor Advocate and the PRDOLHR Outreach workers will continue to coordinate with PathStone staff in their efforts to assist growers in providing safe and affordable housing for farmworkers, hence expanding the range of services available to this population.

3. SERVICES PROVIDED TO FARMWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS THROUGH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM.

Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

(A) PROVIDING THE FULL RANGE OF EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICES TO THE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY, BOTH FARMWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS, THROUGH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM. THIS INCLUDES:

I. HOW CAREER AND TRAINING SERVICES REQUIRED UNDER WIOA TITLE I WILL BE PROVIDED TO MSFWS THROUGH THE ONE-STOP CENTERS;

II. HOW THE STATE SERVES AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW IT INTENDS TO IMPROVE SUCH SERVICES.

Each outreach staff establishes a list of available resources and develops partnerships with local organizations serving MSFWs. Resources include, but are not limited to: Department of Health, Farmworker Health Program, State Workers Compensation, Migrant Legal Services, PathStone Corporation, PRDE’s Adult Education program, and ESL and GED services to MSFWs. Career centers will collaborate with Local Boards to ensure MSFWs have training opportunities for jobs in demand in the area. We believe there are enough resources for Outreach but will continue to seek for additional resources in order to meet the needs of MSFWs as they are identified.

Although Outreach services are provided to MSFWs who cannot or do not wish to visit a physical career center location, other MSFWs visit the career centers in search of employment, placement or training services. At the career center, jobseekers receive an orientation which is a requirement prior to receive any services they might apply for. Through this orientation, workers will become aware of the range of services available to them on the center and how to apply for such services.

Once the workers are informed of all the services available to them, depending on their personal employment needs, might opt to use the self–service resource area where they can access the Internet to perform job searches, preparation of resumes, browsing of job offers, among other services. If in need of employment and placement services, the worker is referred to a Wagner–Peyser Employment Specialist. Here, the worker is registered in Wagner–Peyser and assessed to determine his/her job readiness. Depending on the assessment, the jobseeker might be referred to an available job offer/job development, or to an Occupational Counselor for additional career

services. If deemed not job ready, the jobseeker is referred to one of the several partners located in or out of the center to provide the necessary assistance in attaining the skills necessary to get a suitable job.

Once registered, a farm worker might receive the following career services:

• Assistance for program compliance

• Preparation of job applications

• Job information per type of referral to specific employment opportunities (agricultural and non–agricultural), training, counseling and other services

• Support service referrals for individuals or family members

• Information and referrals to PathStone or other appropriate program services

• Information about farm worker rights (Federal and State employment related protections laws such as MSPA and FLSA)

• How to contact other organizations servicing MSFWs, such as the Migrant Legal Services, Migrant Health and others

• When applicable, Outreach Staff will make appropriate referrals to PathStone, Inc. as stipulated under the Job Service Cooperative Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

The ARS System is operated and coordinated within the One–Stop Centers by WP and other partners. As a result, the Foreign Labor Certification Officer (FLCO) is able to share Interstate Job Orders with these One–Stop Centers staff and PathStone and receive referrals from the different WIOA local areas on which physical integration is not yet done. The FLCO receives job orders from the different State Order Holding Officers asking for qualified workers for open agricultural jobs. These job orders are mainly associated with an H–2A application. The job orders are distributed to local Workforce Centers, and soon to local One–Stop Centers, to be posted in order for job seekers apply to these agricultural jobs.

Outreach workers and WP staff at the career centers will identify workers and screen them against employer requirements; coordinate referrals with the Puerto Rico FLCO; assist with scheduling interviews with employers; and make travel arrangements.

One–Stop Centers will continue to make efforts to strengthen the working relationships with MSFWs and employers. The SIAC system will assist Outreach workers in providing MSFW with the full range of services available through the One–Stop Centers.

Federal requirements state that services provided to MSFWs must be “qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportionate” to the services provided to other job seekers. This means that MSFWs are to receive all workforce development services, benefits and protections on an equitable and non–discriminatory basis (i.e. career guidance, testing, job development, training and job referral). It is necessary, therefore, to continue strengthening the capability of the WP staff to serve the needs

for farm working jobs, by helping them find employment through the use of a Labor Exchange System.

PRDOLHR's web site contains a broad array of employment resources for job seekers and businesses. The PRDOLHR website address is: http://trabajo.pr.gov. In addition, PRDOLHR's provides an extensive bank of available jobs through its Job Bank website, PR.JOBS. The website is user friendly and can translate the site content into Spanish. Career centers' staff assists employers by referring qualified workers to the different job orders posted. However, the process still poses challenges for career center staff to provide farmworkers with available jobs since jobs available in the Puerto Rico Job Bank are mostly in professional jobs which require college preparation, advance skills and job experience. Information on services, including how to register for services is provided online ensuring that farmworkers have the full range of services available whether services are received in the field or a career centers. Bilingual staff are also made available to assist non–Spanish speaking customers.

The career centers receive Job Orders through the Interstate Clearance System. Concerted efforts are made with Order Holding States to refer qualified workers to these job openings. To make sure that employer labor needs are met, WP merit staff works with job matching results to ensure that qualified jobseekers are referred to the corresponding job opening. Outreach efforts are used to recruit workers outside the local job site recruiting area. Outreach staff is committed to provide information on the services provided at the career centers and will help employers posting agricultural job orders, and referring workers to these very same opportunities.

PRDOLHR plans to continue implementing strategies and the use of best practices to address the needs of agricultural employers including the following topics:

• Limited knowledge of State/Federal employment laws and regulations. Career centers will continue to host Forums/Workshops to educate employers and agricultural crew leaders regarding State/Federal laws and regulations.

• Lack of efficient use of local human resources. Career centers staff must encourage/facilitate communication between growers, regarding farm–workers' specific needs. One possible resource is Puerto Rico's Agricultural Extension Program.

• Lack of facilities/staff to screen and interview potential farm workers. Career centers might provide temporary office space that agricultural employers might use as a job–interviewing facility. Workforce Center staff might also provide intake and referral activities at the growers' locations.

• Encourage farm labor contractors to register. Career centers staff might provide forms and instructions for completing crew leader registrations and ensure that farm labor contractors' registration cards are kept current.

• Housing. The ARS requires employers to provide housing at no cost to workers who cannot reasonably return to their place of residence after each working day. This is one of the unique challenges Puerto Rico agricultural employers face when using ARS; especially when providing housing for coffee pickers. Also, the PRDOLHR is planning to coordinate efforts and grant activities with PathStone, Inc., the Housing Grant coordinator for the NFJP grantee under the WIOA 167 housing grant for Puerto Rico, to address the housing needs of farm workers and their families.

Agricultural employers and MSFWs are critical to the State's workforce, especially in the geographic areas where agriculture is the key economic industry. Serving the needs of the agricultural industry requires coordination among the following stakeholders:

• State Monitor Advocate

• WIOA Section 167, PathStone, Inc.

• Groups that represent MSFWs

• Agricultural employer organizations

• Wage and Hour Division (Caribbean District)

• Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

• Federal agencies with regulatory responsibilities for enforcing laws related to agricultural labor

• Other organizations such as OSHA

Each of the above organizations has been instrumental in the ongoing efforts of providing support for the benefit of agricultural employers and their workers. They were provided with the opportunity to comment on and participate in the development of this plan.

(B) MARKETING THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE COMPLAINT SYSTEM TO FARMWORKERS AND OTHER FARMWORKER ADVOCACY GROUPS.

In fulfilling its responsibilities under Federal regulations, the PRDOLHR has established a Uniform Complaint System under WP pursuant to 20 CFR 658.400. With this complaint system in place, career centers have the capacity to resolve MSWF complaints and any others job seeker impacted by WP activities. The state and local managers have the responsibility to resolve complaints filed pursuant to 20 CFR 658.400.

The State Monitor Advocate is responsible for the oversight, operation and performance of the complaint system. The Monitor is also responsible for the marketing and promotion of the complaint system to other MSFW advocacy groups and partners such as MSFWs served by PathStone. The State Monitor Advocate also oversees that Outreach workers inform MSFWs about their rights and the way to contact to the complaint system, and that provide them help to file a claim, as appropriate.

During the required career center orientation, job seekers are briefed on the Wagner–Peyser complaint system. During registration, a WP Employment Specialist explains the complaint system to the worker and how to properly file a complaint. A complaint form is handle out to the worker at that moment. He is also informed of his rights as a MSFW.

(C) MARKETING THE AGRICULTURAL RECRUITMENT SYSTEM TO AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW IT INTENDS TO IMPROVE SUCH PUBLICITY.

VI-WP.E.3.C. MARKETING THE RECRUITMENT SYSTEM FOR AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW IT INTENDS TO IMPROVE SUCH PUBLICITY. THE PLAN DID NOT INDICATE HOW MSFWS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS ARE TO BE SERVED THROUGH THE ONE-STOP SYSTEM. PUERTO RICO MUST DESCRIBE HOW THE PROPOSED STRATEGIES FOR MARKETING THE AGRICULTURAL RECRUITMENT SYSTEM TO AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW TO IMPROVE THIS MARKETING.

With the integration of Wagner-Peyser within the One-Stop Delivery System, the PRDOLHR, through its Employment Service Division, will cross-train One-Stop staff providing services to employers in the use of the Agriculture Recruitment System (ARS). The training will provide staff the capacity and skills to market, in a limited way, the ARS to agricultural employers in order to provide them with the labor force needed to harvest their crops. However, and based on prior experience, we expect agricultural employers not to use the ARS for recruiting workers outside the local area of employment, since escalating an agricultural job order, be it intrastate or interstate, will result in an economic burden that local employers could not afford. This is why local agricultural employers hardly attempt to bring foreign workers into Puerto Rico, for example, during the labor-intensive harvest for coffee.

Notwithstanding, the Employment Service Division will provide workshops for agricultural employers to market the ARS and provide them with the information needed to make an informal decision on whether or not to use the system. Providing housing and transportation reimbursement, as required by regulations, is something that agricultural employers have stated in the past they could not afford. Although the government started a project, under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture, to help employers provide housing for farm workers, the project did not succeed. State laws have been forwarded to stimulate and regulate the employment of foreign workers with no avail since this is a federally occupied field.

Agricultural industry in Puerto Rico is far different from the agricultural industry in the United States and local agricultural employers cannot afford the costs of implementing the required guarantees required to be provided to MSFWs, be them local migrant workers or foreign agricultural workers.

4. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

(A) COLLABORATION

Describe any collaborative agreements the state workforce agency (SWA) has with other MSFW service providers including NFJP grantees and other service providers. Describe how the SWA intends to build upon/increase collaboration with existing partners and in establishing new partners over the next four years (including any approximate timelines for establishing agreements or building upon existing agreements).

Cooperative agreement with Pathstone

The PRDOLHR has a cooperative agreement with PathStone to provide a comprehensive outreach approach to MSFWs. The plan is to renew the agreement in the coming months and to enforce the responsibilities of each partner in the agreement. Wagner–Peyser management at the One–Stop Career Centers will have the task to administer the agreement at the local level by ensuring that

quarterly meetings are held to discuss what issues need attention within the agreement so services reach to the MSFWs community served by the significant career centers.

Legal Services of Puerto Rico

The PRDOLHR has an agreement with the Legal Services Program to provide orientation and valuable information to MSFW who migrate to the United States to work in farm work through the Federal Agricultural Job Order Clearing System. Before departing to work in the USA, workers are briefed on the rights available to them as MSFWs. Coordination is made with Legal Services if any worker is in need of legal services due to the violation of his/her rights by the agricultural employer while working in the USA.

(B) REVIEW AND PUBLIC COMMENT.

In developing the AOP, the SWA must solicit information and suggestions from NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations. In addition, at least 45 calendar days before submitting its final AOP, the SWA must provide a proposed plan to NFJP grantees, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other organizations expressing an interest and allow at least 30 days for review and comment. The SWA must: 1) Consider any comments received in formulating its final proposed AOP; 2) Inform all commenting parties in writing whether their comments have been incorporated and, if not, the reasons therefore; and 3) Transmit the comments and recommendations received and its responses with the submission of the AOP. The AOP must include a statement confirming NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations have been given an opportunity to comment on the AOP. Include the list of organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments.

The PRDOLHR provided the opportunity for all interested parties to review and comment on the draft AOP. The organizations listed below were sent the draft AOP and invited to comment; however, no comments were received. As the program year progresses and the needs of the agribusiness community evolves, the PRDOLHR will continue to work with partners of the agricultural community to explore new approaches to meeting the demands of Puerto Rico’s expanding agricultural industry.

The following organizations received the draft AOP:

• Puerto Rico Department of Education (PRDE) / Migrant Education Program

• Puerto Rico Farmworker Health Program

• Puerto Rico Legal Services Farmworker Division

• Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture

• Department of Export and Commerce (PRDEDC) / WDP

• PathStone Corporation

• USDOL Wage and Hours Division

• Puerto Rico Farmers Association

(C) DATA ASSESSMENT.

Review the previous four years Wagner-Peyser data reports on performance. Note whether the State has been meeting its goals to provide MSFWs quantitatively proportionate services as compared to non-MSFWs. If it has not met these goals, explain why the State believes such goals were not met and how the State intends to improve its provision of services in order to meet such goals.

PERCENTAGE OF MSFW AND NON–MSFW SERVED, PY 2012–2015 (SOURCE: PRDOLHR)

PY 2012: 1QTR WP 2012: 34; 1QTR WSFW 2012: 57; 2QTR WP 2012: 33; 2QTR WSFW 2012: 56; 3QTR WP 2012: 33; 3QTR WSFW 2012: 50; 4QTR WP 2012: 35; 4QTR WSFW 2012: 55

PY 2013: 1QTR WP 2013: 31; 1QTR WSFW 2013: 35; 2QTR WP 2013: 36; 2QTR WSFW 2013: 27; 3QTR WP 2013: 15; 3QTR WSFW 2013: 14; 4QTR WP 2013: 46; 4QTR WSFW 2013: 69

PY 2014: 1QTR WP 2014: 57; 1QTR WSFW 2014: 76; 2QTR WP 2014: 40; 2QTR WSFW 2014: 56; 3QTR WP 2014: 42; 3QTR WSFW 2014: 55; 4QTR WP 2014: 43; 4QTR WSFW 2014: 58

PY 2015: 1QTR WP 2015: 45; 1QTR WSFW 2015: 61; 2QTR WP 2015: 47; 2QTR WSFW 2015: 61; 3QTR WP 2015: NA; 3QTR WSFW 2015: NA; 4QTR WP 2015: NA; 4QTR WSFW 2015: NA

(D) ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

The plan must include an explanation of what was achieved based on the previous AOP, what was not achieved and an explanation as to why the State believes the goals were not achieved, and how the State intends to remedy the gaps of achievement in the coming year.

MSFWs contacted by outreach activities

During PY 2014, a little more than 2,200 workers were contacted, far from the 7,000 projected in the PY 2014 AOP. This was due to the fact that only four Outreach workers were designated at the significant local offices due to budget constraints. In 2015, the Outreach worker at the Guayama office was lost; the office accounts for over 60% of all Outreach workers contacts.

As described in the AOP above, it is our commitment to continue reinforcing the Outreach Program to comply with regulations as required by 20 CFR 653.107, which requires PRDOLHR to operate an Outreach Program to reach farmworkers that for different reasons normally did not reach ES local offices. Our plan is to be able to provide Outreach service activities through eight career centers in agriculturally significant areas. We are still in an economic crisis and have seen Wagner–Peyser funds being reduced for the last two years. If this tendency continues, Outreach services to MSFWs will be adversely affected.

Notwithstanding the above, efforts will be made to hire and designate Outreach workers for the Arecibo, Humacao, Coamo, Guayama, and Ponce career centers to provide the whole range of service to MSFWs dwelling in this significant agricultural areas. Authorization to cover those vacancies will be evaluated in a case–by–case basis. If authorized, the PRDOLHR will be in a

position to increase the number of MSFWs served and provide outreach services to more than half the population of farm workers that at this time cannot be reached.

Equity Performance Indicators

Notwithstanding with the lack of Outreach workers in most of the significant offices, we were able to meet the equity and minimal services indicators to MSWFs. This means that all services to MSFWs were provided in a qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportionate to the services provided to other job seekers. The PRDOLHR is committed to continue providing services to MSFWs at the same service level to other job seekers. The PRDOLHR will continue to overview equity and minimum service performance indicators to measure the effectiveness of the MSFW Program by Wagner–Peyser staff.

Referral of MSFWs to interstate agricultural job orders

The Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) is operated by Wagner–Peyser within the career centers and other partners like PathStone. Although Wagner–Peyser staff is trained to make referral of workers through the Interstate Clearance System, during PY 2015 a series of events triggered the necessity of reviewing the way in which the local offices of the Employment Service were screening workers interested in being referred to those job orders.

We projected, as a requested by the USDOL Regional Office in Boston, to develop a Farmworker Workshop to be provided to MSFWs in a compulsory basis as a requirement to be referred to Agricultural Job Orders. With the workshop, we project that problems encountered by the Agricultural Employers be minimized and more workers be able to complete the Job Contract and complaints be kept to a minimum. We project to have this workshop ready by no later than June 30, 2016, to be implemented starting in PY 2016 as part of the WIOA Unified State Plan for the next four years.

(E) STATE MONITOR ADVOCATE

The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP.

The PRDOL SMA and State agricultural staff worked together to provide feedback needed in the development of this AOP. This process afforded the SMA the opportunity to review, approve and discuss any service delivery strategy changes needed in the AOP for the upcoming planning year. The SMA is directly involved in the development of the plan and approved the plan as drafted.

F. WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

1. The Wagner-Peyser Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time. (sec 121(e)(3)); Yes

2. The State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111 (State agency staffing requirements) if the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers; Yes

3. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and Yes

4. State agency merit-based public employees provide Wagner-Peyser Act-funded labor exchange activities in accordance with Department of Labor regulations. Yes

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAMS

The State Plan must include a description of the following as it pertains to Adult Education and Literacy programs under Title II, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA).

A. ALIGNING OF CONTENT STANDARDS

Describe how the eligible agency will, by July 1, 2016, align its content standards for adult education with State-adopted challenging academic content standards, as adopted under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(1)).

Since 2008, the Adult Education program of the PRDE has been engaged in a curricular review process to enhance and update the educational practices associated with adult learning. This project is the cornerstone of the academic and curricular activities. The implementation of the new curriculum began in August 2012, with the official authorization by the Secretary of Education. The PRDE and the Adult Education program are committed to implement the new curriculum. The Adult Education program content standards for adult education are fully aligned with the PRDE academic content standards. Since the curriculum is not a static document, as knowledge and teaching methodologies evolve, does the curriculum. This process of change is structured by the PRDE. Thus, new knowledge and skills are incorporated as needed by industry and society.

This year, the focus is on the continuation of the full implementation of the curricula at the classroom level. Since the Adult Education program's academic content standards were develop in accordance with the Common Core federal program and PRDE's content standards, our new curricular content, per subject and level, includes additional and enhanced requirements (knowledge and skills) and a higher level of performance. Thus, the implementation of the curricula in all Adult Education program centers requires continuous faculty development efforts to assure teachers are thoroughly familiar with the academic content standards requirements.

The overall scope of the professional development efforts is centered on the following activities:

• Newly hired academic facilitators will oversee the implementation of the curriculum in all Adult Education program centers and activities.

• Adult Education program center directors and key staff will promote academic supervision and the full implementation of the curriculum in their areas of responsibility.

• All Adult Education program teachers will receive specialized training on the standards, the indicators, and assessment activities of the curriculum. In addition, they will become familiar with the prepared syllabus, academic guides for the classroom and computer-based interactive exercises developed to help participants acquired the desired knowledge and skills.

B. LOCAL ACTIVITIES

Describe how the State will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA, fund each eligible provider to establish or operate programs that provide the adult education and literacy activities, including programs that provide such activities concurrently. The Unified or Combined State Plan must include at a minimum the scope, content, and organization of local activities.

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY ACTIVITIES (SECTION 203 OF WIOA)

- Adult education;
- Literacy;
- Workplace adult education and literacy activities;
- Family literacy activities;
- English language acquisition activities;
- Integrated English literacy and civics education;
- Workforce preparation activities; or
- Integrated education and training that—
    1. Provides adult education and literacty activities, concurrently and contextually with both, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, and
    2. Is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

Puerto Rico adult education and literacy activities under Title II are provided by a network of 104 service providers. Service providers include twenty eight school district with sixty-five schools, fifteen community colleges and universities, eight municipalities, twelve community based organizations, faith-based organizations, two libraries, and two correctional facilities serving adults who are basic skilled deficient, does not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and has not achieved an equivalent level of education; or is an English language learner. Classes are offered throughout the island, maximizing adult education student's access to high quality staff and services.

The Puerto Rico Adult Education Program provides academic instruction and educational services below the postsecondary level to these adults in order to:

1. Assist them to become literate and obtain knowledge and skills for employment and economic self-sufficiency;

2. Support the educational and skill achievement of parents and family members to participate in the educational development of their children and improve economic opportunities for families;

3. Assist immigrants and ELLs in improving their English and Mathematics proficiency and understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; and

4. Assist incarcerated individuals in strengthening their knowledge and skills to promote successful re-entry into society.

Under the WIOA (Section 203), adult education and literacy activities are defined as, "programs, activities, and services that include adult education, literacy, workplace adult education, and literacy activities, family literacy activities, English language acquisition activities, integrated English literacy and civics education, workforce preparation activities, or integrated education and training." All adult

education, literacy, and English language acquisition activities are required to be based upon the PRDE's standards for English language arts/literacy, mathematics, and science. Eligible local providers are required to describe, in their application for funds, their plans for supporting the transition to and implementation of the PRDE's AEP standards. In the Plan, local providers are required to address professional development and ongoing assistance for all instructors; development and instructional materials aligned to the PRDE AEP standards and monitoring and ongoing technical assistance.

The following program activities receive federal and/or state funding:

Adult Education and Literacy Activities

Include instruction and education services below a postsecondary level in reading, writing, and speaking English, and computing and solving problems. These services increase a student's ability to achieve a secondary school diploma or its equivalent, transition to postsecondary education and training, and obtain employment. PRDE ABE Program curricula are aligned with the Adult Education academic content standards. Programs integrate employability skills, workforce preparation, contextualized curricula and digital literacy and job readiness skills.

English Language AcquisitionActivities

PRDE's will award grants to eligible providers for the delivery of English Language instruction which assists adults English language learners to improve reading, writing, speaking and understanding English. PRDE curriculum will be revised to include basic numeracy and mathematics skills. Instructional services for ELA students include proven or evidence-based instructional techniques and learning strategies that support oral skills development for ELLs'.

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education

Puerto Rico will award grants to eligible providers to carry out a program of Integrated English Language Civics Education that integrates a training component. The curriculum must provide Immigrants and English learners access to English language acquisition services and civics education and include workforce training. English language skills are taught contextually within instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation, understanding the American system of government, education, healthcare, etc. and participation in the workforce.

Workforce Preparation Activities

Programs funded by the Adult Education and Family Literary Act will provide contextualized instruction incorporating basic academic skills, critical thinking skills, digital literacy and self-management skills in all levels of instruction to ensure that students are prepared for successful transition to post-secondary education, training opportunities and employment.

Programs offering workplace adult education and literacy activities will work collaboratively with an employer or employee organization at a workplace or an off-site location that is designed to improve the productivity of the workforce. Workplace literacy activities involve strong partnerships with employers or employee organizations in the design and delivery of the instructional program based on workplace needs.

Local programs will receive professional development and technical assistance to ensure that contextualized workforce preparation activities are included and effectively implemented in curriculum offerings.

Integrated Education and Training Activities

Puerto Rico will provide adult education and literacy activities contextually and concurrently with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for educational and career advancement. Education will be provided in the context of industry-specific needs that involve employers and is integrated with occupational skills training. Programs will provide work-relevant instruction through PRDE career pathways and integrated education and training activities.

Family Literacy Activities

As defined in WIOA requires coordination with other services for the children's component.

Family literacy defined in WIOA must integrate all of the following activities: Parent or family adult education and literacy activities that lead to readiness for postsecondary education or training, career advancement, and economic self-sufficiency; Interactive literacy activities between parents or family members and their children; Training for parents or family members regarding how to be the primary teachers for their children and full partners in the education of their children and age appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences. Puerto Rico ABLE programs will assist students in their roles as parents and family members by providing foundational skills that enable them to support their children's learning needs and improve economic self-sufficiency for their families.

Puerto Rico will expect from local providers to move participants closer to achieving the goal of economic self-sufficiency through participation in activities designed to improve academic, digital literacy, employability and critical thinking skills. All this activities (children's and parents) must be designed, delivered and supported by an approved provider.

Through existing Puerto Rico-funded grants, several areas of concurrent activities will be provided:

a. Career Pathways- One of the basic concepts is focused around the link between basic skills and occupational coursework in the form of an integrated Career Pathway Bridge. These Bridges ensure students find an effective path to post-secondary credit, credential attainment, integrated workplace skills and employment. PRDE's AEP Career Pathways approach offer low-skilled adults well-articulated training and employment steps targeted to locally in-demand jobs combined with promising instructional approaches and supportive services. PRDE's AEP Career Pathways program will include partnerships with multiple providers, including community based organizations and technical colleges and universities, human services and workforce agencies, and employers and their representatives.

b. Integrated English Language Learning- As the global economy and technological demands place a bigger challenge on students to acquire an additional language, many Puerto Rico Adult Education participants are motivated to become bilingual, in view of this the PRDE has made its priority playing an active role in facilitating the goal of becoming bilingual among its participants. The program aims to develop adults listening, reading, writing and oral skills in English, and measure their performance

using the PRDE's AEP English Program standards and through the performance measures established for the program.

All IEL activities involve integrated education and training activities which must use contextualized curriculum aligned to PRDE Content Standards.

c. Institutionalized Individuals-In addition to ABE and ELL activities, programs will provide individuals a path to a high school credential, Integrated Education and Training, transition to re-entry initiatives and PRDE career pathways services.

d. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IEL/CE) will be delivered in combination with integrated education and training activities. IEL/CE instruction require adherence to the PRDE Content Standards. PRDE IEL/CE grants recipients must provide a contextualized program of study that incorporates civics education instruction with integrated education and training.

SPECIAL RULE

Each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

C. CORRECTIONS EDUCATION AND OTHER EDUCATION OF INSTITUTIONALIZED INDIVIDUALS

Describe how the State will establish and operate programs under section 225 of WIOA for corrections education and education of other institutionalized individuals, including how it will fund, in accordance with the requirements of Title II, subtitle C, any of the following academic programs for:

a. Adult education and literacy activities;
b. Special education, as determined by the eligible agency;
c. Secondary school credit;
d. Integrated education and training;
e. Career pathways;
f. Concurrent enrollment;
g. Peer tutoring; and
h. Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

Each eligible agency using funds provided under Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution must give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program.

At present there are approximately 12,246 incarcerated adults in 38 correctional institutions in Puerto Rico. A total of 2,138 of those incarcerated qualify for services and have less than five years to complete of their sentence and 918 participated in Adult Education Program Services during the 2014-2015 SY. These participants are being served through the Adult Education Program at the basic and secondary level through local adult education grantee programs.

Funded program will deliver academic instruction in adult basic education, adult secondary education and English Language Acquisition for incarcerated individuals to provide the resources and tools needed for transition to post-secondary education and training opportunities and unsubsidized employment.

In accordance with Section 225 of WIOA, instruction is focused in providing the following services:

(a) Adult Basic Education (ABE levels 0-8.9);

(b) Adult Secondary Education (ASE levels 9-12)

(c) High School equivalency preparation

(d) English as a Second Language (ESL NRS levels 1-6)

(e) Integrated education and training

(f) Career Pathways related services and instruction

As with all ABLE programs, correctional education will include workplace preparation activities to prepare offenders with the skills required for successful transition to postsecondary education and training and employment, Employability Skills (aligning with OCTAE's Employability Skills Framework), critical elements to reduce recidivism. The correctional education programs will focus on measureable skill gains, such as Educational Functioning Level gains and High School Equivalency completions.

One of the purposes for Title II under WIOA is to assist incarcerated individuals in strengthening their knowledge and skills to promote re-entry into society. Puerto Rico will continue to offer adult education to individuals incarcerated in Puerto Rico to provide educational services that prepare them for employment, economic self-sufficiency, family roles, and responsible citizenship upon their release.

Not more than 20 percent of the state's ABLE funds will be used for corrections education.

D. INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL ESTABLISH AND OPERATE INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAMS UNDER SECTION 243 OF WIOA, FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS WHO ARE ADULTS, INCLUDING PROFESSIONALS WITH DEGREES AND CREDENTIALS IN THEIR NATIVE COUNTRIES.

As mandated by WIOA Title II the PRDE will be integrating English Literacy with Civics Education. The teaching will integrate a comprehensive civic participation component into English Literacy. IEL/Civics project will stress contextualized learning in which language and literacy are developed through practical, immediately relevant, thematic units around civics education that is integrated into the skills areas of English reading, and writing.

The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico conducted an open, three year competition for the program period of July 1, 2015-June 30, 2017, for IEL/CE.

Under WIA, Puerto Rico has a longstanding history of providing English Literacy and Civics Education. The State will leverage these past successes to meet the new requirements under WIOA. The PRDE's AEP application for IELCE (i.e., section 243) funds will require applicants to describe how they plan to provide English language acquisition and civics education concurrently and contextually. The proposed activities and budget will be reviewed by PRDE's AEP to ensure that they meet all statutory requirements.

IEL/CE will include activities described under section 243. In addition participants will have exposure to: PRDE AEP curriculum that builds participant's language skills and incorporates career awareness and workforce readiness and contextualized to in demand industries. The curriculum includes an overview of important dates/events in U.S. history and their significance to current events. It also includes an overview of the U.S. government at the federal, State, and local levels. The eligible provider would provide contextualized English language acquisition instruction that includes general employability, workplace, and financial vocabulary.

The goal of the Puerto Rico IEL/CE program is to prepare ELLs for employment in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self sufficiency.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL FUND, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF TITLE II, SUBTITLE C, INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION SERVICES AND HOW THE FUNDS WILL BE USED FOR THOSE SERVICES.

PRDE AEP requires the same application process for eligible providers for sections 225, 231, and 243 to ensure applications are evaluated and scored consistently and that all eligible providers have direct and equitable access to apply for grants and contracts.

Funds will be distributed on a competitive basis through the RFP process. Funds will be used to provide Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education instruction. The funds will be used to cover expenses for instructors and purchase materials.

Activities that will be funded with section 243 funds include instruction in basic reading, writing, and speaking the English language. Workforce preparation activities such as basic skills, digital literacy skills, critical thinking skills and employability skills are integrated into the IEL/CE curriculum. IEL/Civics Education, should also focus on student's career pathways goals.

E. STATE LEADERSHIP

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT THE REQUIRED STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA.

The PRDE will use funds made available under section 222(a)(2) to enhance the quality of programming in the adult education system. Not more than 12.5 percent (12.5%) of the grant funds made available will be used to carry out State Leadership activities under section 223. Activities to be supported with federal leadership funds and extended using PRDE funding include:

1. The Puerto Rico Department of Education will work collaboratively with other core programs and partner agencies to align and coordinate services for program participants. Leadership funds will be used to build the capacity of grantees to coordinate and align services by cross-training staff on intake/orientation, eligibility screening, and referral between partners, and other joint mechanisms developed through agency partnerships. In addition, the development of all components of career pathways will continue to be a priority with a focus on bridge programming and integrated education and training.

2. The PRDE supports a statewide Adult Basic Education professional development (PD) advisory committee that meets quarterly to identify key present and future PD needs, develop PD plans and resources, identify and implement best practices in PD, coordinate PD activities, and review evaluation data from activities for continuous improvement of an efficient and effective PD system. This advisory committee has approximately 20 members and includes State ABE staff, PD providers, and local ABE instructors and administrators. The PRDE's PD system uses a data-driven planning and evaluation process to identify PD needs and set priorities for each year and evaluate the effectiveness of offerings. The results of an annual statewide PD needs assessment of local providers, along with evaluation data from previous PD efforts, research regarding best practices, and federal recommendations are used to inform PD priorities and the design and delivery of PD activities. PD activities are aligned to the PRDE's ABE PD standards, which emphasize research-based features of effective PD—longer-term, job-embedded activities with opportunities for collaborative participation and the application of new knowledge and skills. Both statewide and regional opportunities are provided for adult educators to develop and share their knowledge and skills, including professional learning communities, study circles, statewide and regional conferences, online courses, webinars, and others. Evaluation of PD outcomes, especially evidence of teacher change and quality of implementation of new knowledge and skills, is integrated into every initiative to ensure the effectiveness of PD activities.

PRDE Leadership funds will be used to support PD activities that focus on a variety of areas of emphasis, including content standards implementation, evidence-based reading instruction (EBRI), adult learning, research-based instructional methodologies, effective program management, integrated education and training, bridge programming, transition to postsecondary education, use of technology, universal design, serving students with disabilities, and volunteer training and recruitment. The PRDE office contracts for ABE professional development services related to research-based literacy, numeracy, English language instruction, content standards, and transitions. These PD activities include Designing Contextualized Instruction, Integrating Employability Skills into the Classroom, Curricula Content Standards associated Indicators, the Suggested Classroom Activities and lessons guides, Adult Career Pathways (Phase 2-3) and resource dissemination; and implementation of content standards. In addition, the PRDE ABE office contracts to deliver PD and technical assistance in the arena of serving adults with disabilities. The disabilities service provider

also provides training on using Universal Design for Learning principles and strategies to address the varied needs of adult learners.

3. The PRDE will deliver technical assistance to eligible providers to enhance program effectiveness, increase the ability of providers to meet established performance standards, and fulfill obligations associated with being a one-stop partner. Specific areas of focus will include:

• Increasing the capacity of instructors and programs to provide quality instruction in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition, and distance education, via implementation of professional development activities and associated technical assistance such as:

o Annual Language and Literacy Workshops

o Low-literacy Adult ESL Study Circles

o Annual Math Workshops

o Online resource libraries in the areas of adult ESL, numeracy, writing, PRDE content standards, transitions, and project-based learning.

• Enabling providers to establish, build upon, or maintain effective relationships with other core providers via training on referral systems, data sharing/reporting, integration of education with occupational training, and transition strategies for postsecondary enrollment or employment.

• Using technology to improve program effectiveness through training and technical assistance focused on preparing instructors and program administrators to identify and utilize technology to enhance instruction, programming, and distance education. The PRDE contracts to provide PD in the area of technology through activities such as face-to-face and online training in a variety of areas, including educational technology and digital literacy instruction. In addition, other training and technical assistance focuses on the effective use of the statewide data system to maintain accurate student data and continuously improve programming.

The PRDE office and PD providers will employ a variety of methods to ensure that information about proven or promising practices and models is disseminated to eligible providers and practitioners working in the ABE system. These will include activities such as:

o Local program site visits

o Sessions at state and regional conferences showcasing promising practices and models

o Webinars showcasing promising practices and models

o Job-embedded professional development activities, including professional learning communities, study circles, and peer observations

4. The PRDE will provide grantee oversight to include data monitoring, site visits, and a program improvement process for low-performing grantees.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT PERMISSIBLE STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA, IF APPLICABLE.

The PRDE Adult Education Program will develop the following permissible Leadership Activities under section 223 of WIOA:

• Development of Career Pathways (Phase 2-3) to provide access to employment and training services for individuals in adult education and literacy activities

The PRDE is committed to improve, expand and create adult education programs that include adult education Career Pathways and transitioning opportunities to postsecondary programs. The PRDE is aware that a substantial gap exists between the skills of the labor force and the needs of employers in many high-growth industries, including healthcare, technology and manufacturing. This gap results in unemployment while well-paying jobs go unfilled and, at the same time, many low-skilled adults persist in low-wage work with little opportunity for advancement. Career Pathways programs aim to address the economy's vital need for skilled workers while offering low-wage workers the opportunity to obtain education and training they need to succeed in the labor market.

In order to achieve these goals, our Career Pathways approach offer low-skilled adults well articulated training and employment steps targeted to locally in-demand jobs combined with promising instruction approaches and supportive services. This approach presupposes that post-secondary education and training should be organized as a series of manageable steps leading to successively better credentials and employment opportunities in growing occupations. Each step is designed to prepare participants for the next level of employment and education and also to provide a credential with labor market value. To effectively engage, retain, and facilitate learning, the program will integrate the following four core elements:

• Comprehensive assessment

• Promising approaches to basic and occupational skills

• Academic and non-academic supports

• Strategies for connecting participants to employers

Individual programs vary in terms of emphasis placed on each core component, although all are comprehensive in nature to address the learning and life challenges facing adult participants. The PRDE's Career Pathways program will include partnerships with multiple providers, including community based organizations, community and technical colleges, human services and workforce agencies, and employers and their representatives. The PRDE's Career Pathways program will be designed to allow entries, exits, and re-entries at each stage, depending on skill levels and prior training, employment prospects, and changing personal situations.

The Career Pathways program will have the following main components:

• For those participants with skill levels too low to meet entry requirements, basic and occupational skills instruction will be delivered concurrently to support accelerated entry into college-level occupational training programs and credentials.

• Instructors overlap, at least fifty percent of the time, integrated basic skills and occupational training instruction, allowing participants to build knowledge about the industry while increasing their basic skills.

• Participants will be exposed to work environments through a diversity of instructional tools including but not limited to labs, internships and clinical placements.

• A range of academic and non-academic supportive services will be made available to help participants persist in their programs, such as: guidance and assistance to apply for available financial resources; access to standard college support services such as tutoring and the career center; and employment connections to local industry and access to college career centers.

The PRDE is aware of the challenges associated with the development of connections to Career Pathways and the establishment of partnerships; the significant investment of time and effort necessary for the design and implementation of key ABE pathways components for the recruitment of participants; the development of basic skills courses and high quality professional development programs needed; and the collection and analysis of data. Therefore, considers the development of Career Pathways to be an endeavor, which will have to be tackle in phases during the course of the four school years comprised by the Unified State Plan for the PRDE to be successful.

• High quality professional development programs to improve the instruction provided.

Aware of the importance that greater understanding and knowledge of Adult Career Pathways is crucial to a successful implementation, the PRDE is committed to develop high quality instructional content, professional development activities, and support services needed for the design and implementation of the Adult Career Pathways, which will help teachers/instructors better understand the career pathways systems and expand their professional knowledge.

Areas and themes related to the development and delivery of career pathways systems that would help low-skilled adults transition into postsecondary education and employment, include the following:

• Design of Contextualized Instruction

• Integration of Employability Skills into the Classroom

• Training of Adult Education program faculty in Curricula Content Standards associated Indicators, Suggested Classroom Activities and lessons guides, Assessment Rubrics and the Evaluation Guides for all academic themes

• Integration of Career Pathways into the Adult Education program curriculum-framework

• Integration of Career Counseling and Planning into Adult Education

• Focusing participants on Career Pathways

• Provision of technical assistance to eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities receiving funds under this title

The assistance will include the following topics:

• Technical assistance in the new curriculum thematic areas

• Academic supervision to offer mentoring and coaching in both contents and Andragogy process.

• Training and technical assistance in the integration of digital literacy skills into all adult education and literacy activities

It is imperative that Adult Education program providers are integrated in the PRDE's efforts in designing and implementing the Career Pathways systems, and to be provided with concise information, definitions, historical perspectives, and practical ideas about how Career Pathways can be used to improve student achievement.

• Monitoring and Evaluation of the quality of, and the improvement in Adult Education and Literacy Activities.

Ongoing data collection and analysis are essential in supporting the design, implementation, and evaluation of Adult Basic Education Career Pathways, including the following activities:

• In the planning stages, the program will conduct an analysis of labor market data, which will help our Adult Basic Education program identify local workforce needs and select an occupational focus for the pathway.

• During the instruction period, program and participant data will provide immediate feedback on how well course objectives are being met and suggest areas for improvement, if necessary.

• Finally, data are needed at the conclusion of instruction to evaluate the effectiveness of the basic skills training and assess participant skills gains.

We realize that while some of these outcomes are measured after completion of basic skills training, other might take longer to assess as participants' progress through the pathway (attainment of certificates or degrees and job promotion or advancement). Keeping this in mind, the PRDE will develop plans to measure participant outcomes at all future educational and employment steps along the pathway, as well as the selection of appropriate assessment tools, which will provide information about the pathway program's effectiveness and to make any improvements needed to better serve pathway participants.

F. ASSESSING QUALITY

Describe how the eligible agency will assess the quality of providers of adult education and literacy activities under title II and take actions to improve such quality, including providing the activities described in section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA.

The PRDE's AEP evaluates programs quarterly through a desk audit process in which measures such as average attendance hours, educational functioning level gains, number of students post-tested, among other, are reported and reviewed. The desk audits also allow programs to review operational aspects of the program such as the percentage of funds expended, completion of required professional development, and completed personnel activity reports.

The PRDE Adult Education Program also performs continuous site visits for each adult education and literacy program to ensure that state and federal laws and policies are followed, review program performance, and connect with local providers. Based upon the findings during the site visit, regional program executive directors provide technical assistance to program directors and staff to ensure continuous improvement.

Additionally, approximately every year, PRDE's AEP Monitoring Unit staff conducts an intensive program review to assess each program in the following areas:

1. Program Management and Reporting

2. Financials

3. Professional Development

4. Student Intake, Documentation, and Orientation

5. Program Policies

6. Instruction

7. Teaching/Classroom Observation

8. Technology

9. Retention

10. Collaboration

11. Facilities

This program review process allows program staff and the PRDE's AEP Program Director to thoroughly assess program operations, observe classroom instruction, and review State and federal laws and policies. Each program review is accompanied by a full financial review by the PRDE's AEP Monitoring Unit and Administration Office Director staff.

Once each program is reviewed, the program receives a report that indicates all findings, recommendations and commendations. The program then develops and submits a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) which details how each finding will be remedied. The program director and program regional executive director work together to ensure that each finding is corrected, at which time the program and the PRDE Monitoring Unit are notified.

The PRDE's AEP uses various means of assessment in its annual and ongoing evaluation process, including site monitoring visits, desk monitoring, program improvement processes, and performance and financial audits. The results of these processes determine program improvement actions.

Professional Development Quality Assessment

Participants are surveyed after all workshops and conference presentations to evaluate and provide feedback on the activity or event. In regional workshops, changes are made to future workshops based on input from participants. Programs review student data to determine if the training impacted student outcomes and also to determine areas where additional training might be needed. The annual training plan includes PRDE's AEP priorities, input from surveys about training needs, and advice from a statewide professional development advisory committee. Survey results are reviewed with the professional development advisory committee to decide how the training would best be delivered, face-to-face or through conference presentations. Workshops conducted on Curricula Content Standards, Contextualized Instruction and Career Pathways, among others, include a post-test to determine if the learning objectives were met. Best practices are identified in the advisory committees, and this might result in a webinar delivered through the PRDE's AEP or presented at one of the annual conferences conducted by the PRDE's AEP leadership professional development staff. Data from PRDE's High School Equivalency Test results are reviewed to determine areas in which students might need additional instruction. Adult Education courses will continue to be a priority for regional trainings and conferences.

Monitoring

The PRDE's AEP implemented a Monitoring Unit that ensured student performance improvement, financial accountability, program quality, and regulatory compliance of local providers in accordance with federal laws and regulations, PRDE statutes and rules, and the provisions of an approved grant award. The monitoring unit is risk based. Risk assessment is a process used to evaluate variables associated with the level of risk to the Puerto Rico Adult Education Program associated with each provider. In order to complete risk assessments, certain risk factors have been identified which might affect the level of risk for each provider. A risk matrix is completed for each provider. The annual risk assessment is conducted by the Monitoring Unit team to determine the monitoring strategy appropriate for each provider. A range of monitoring strategies includes conference calls, improvement plans, desktop self-assessment, grant reviews, etc., with a more comprehensive strategy such as an onsite visit designated for providers deemed to be at higher risk.

Actions Taken to Improve Quality

If noncompliance finding(s) are identified, a corrective action plan will be implemented. The corrective action plan must identify the findings and specific strategies the provider will implement to ensure that finding(s) have been resolved.

• Program Improvement Plan. The PRDE's AEP conducts annual performance evaluations. The evaluations process is a data-driven accountability system for adult education programs. In a

competition year, all awarded agencies are expected to meet at least 90 percent (90%) of the PRDE's AEP Performance Target or demonstrate improvement for each educational functioning level. In continuing years, an Adult Education Program Improvement Plan (AEPIP) will be required if the PRDE's AEP determines that an eligible recipient failed to meet at least 90 percent (90%) of the PRDE's AEP performance target or demonstrate improvement for each functioning level from the agency's previous year completion rates.

An AEPIP will be required for each educational functioning level that fails to meet the required standards and will be implemented starting in the second year of funding. In addition to program improvement plans and other actions taken to improve quality, the following activities are available:

--- New Director Training. Provides new directors with information such as Federal and State guidelines, data collection and National Reporting System (NRS) reporting, and resources needed to administer their programs.

--- Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) Training/Trainers. Through ongoing training, a network of trained professionals ensures the uniform administration and reporting of assessments used for determining federal-level gains.

--- Data Reporting and Program Improvement Training. Provides training on the fundamentals of the NRS. Topics include monitoring, data analysis and collection, types of data and measures, assessments, data quality, and related information.

--- Technical Assistance. Adult education bimonthly calls inform adult educators of program changes and reporting announcements, and provide opportunities to ask questions to State staff. In addition, technical assistance papers are posted on the federal Department of Education website.

--- Teacher Training. Provides information and resources to support instruction in the areas of PRDE's High School Equivalency Test preparation, OCTAE's Employability Skills framework, Contextualized Instruction, Curricula Content Standards, career awareness and planning, career pathways, reading, and math instructional strategies.

CERTIFICATIONS

States must provide written and signed certifications that

1. The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan. Yes

2. The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program. Yes

3. The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan. Yes

4. All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law. Yes

5. A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan. Yes

6. The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan. Yes

7. The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan. Yes

8. The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program. Yes

CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements

The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions.

(3) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

STATEMENT FOR LOAN GUARANTEES AND LOAN INSURANCE

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:
If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

Applicant’s Organization **Puerto Rico Department of Education**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Rafael Román Meléndez**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Secretary of Education**

SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (only if applicable) (http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html). If applicable, please print, sign, and email to OCTAE_MAT@ed.gov

ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

1. The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding supplement and not supplant provisions). Yes

2. The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA. Yes

3. The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not “eligible individuals” within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA. Yes

4. The Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be delivered in combination with integrated education and training activities; Yes

5. The Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to (1) prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency and (2) integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program; and Yes

6. Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program. Yes

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan* must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA:

_____

* Sec. 102(b)(D)(iii) of WIOA

A. INPUT OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

All agencies, except for those that are independent consumer-controlled commissions, must describe the following:

1. INPUT PROVIDED BY THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, INCLUDING INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN, RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL'S REPORT, THE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION, AND OTHER COUNCIL REPORTS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE COUNCIL'S FUNCTIONS;

The following 24 Normative Communications of the PRVRA were reviewed by the State Rehabilitation Council (PRSRC):

1. Normative Communication No. 2015–09: Amendment to the Services Provision Procedure in the Centers/Units of Assessment and Adjustment

2. Normative Communication No. 2015–10: Amendment to Section 4.1.2.5 (Scoliosis) of the Medical Procedures Manual, Volume 1

3. Normative Communication No. 2015–11: Amendment to the Form Mental Health Referral Sheet (VR–897)

4. Normative Communication No. 2015–12: Procedure for Requesting Information from the Registry of Persons Convicted of Corruption under Law 119 of September 7 of 1997

5. Normative Communication No. 2015–13: Amendment to Normative Communication 2006–27: Procedure to Develop the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) of the PRVRA

6. Normative Communication No. 2015–14: Orientation Process for New Personnel

7. Normative Communication No. 2015–15: Closures in Status 26

8. Normative Communication No. 2015–16: Procedure for the Handling of Repossession of Occupational Equipment to Consumers of the PRVRA Who Do Not Use It in Accordance with the Provisions of the IPE

9. Normative Communication No. 2015–17: Manual of Rules and Policies of the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration to Refer and Investigate Suspected Incidents of Improper and Illegal Acts Constituting Corruption and Anti–Ethical Conduct

10. Normative Communication No. 2015–18: Manual on the System of Performance Evaluation and Development of Staff

11. Normative Communication No. 2015–19: Lottery Ticket Costs for Ordinary and Extraordinary Drawings of the Puerto Rico Lottery

12. Normative Communication No. 2015–20: Closing of State Fiscal Year 2014–2015

13. Normative Communication No. 2015–21: Implementation of Mechanized System (Database) in the Centers/Units of Assessment and Adjustment (CAAs/UAAs)

14. Normative Communication No. 2015–22: Procedure for the Classification of Significant and Most Significant Disability in the CRIS System

15. Normative Communication No. 2015–23: Implementation of Mechanized System for the Talents Bank in the Centers of Support and Employment Modes

16. Normative Communication No. 2015–24: Amendment to Normative Communication 2014–10: Referrals Procedure to Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs)

17. Normative Communication No. 2015–25: Procedure for Applying the Eligibility Criteria

18. Normative Communication No. 2015–26: Requirements to Work as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

19. Normative Communication No. 2016–01: Procedure to Provide Vocational Rehabilitation Services to Consumers Whose Employment Outcome is Fisherman

20. Normative Communication No. 2016–02: Services of the Unit/Laboratory of Neuropsychological Disorders

21. Normative Communication No. 2016–03: Registration in the CRIS System of the Comparable Benefit of Counseling for Benefits Planning

22. Normative Communication No. 2016–04: Procedure to Recommend Service Training in the Following Categories: Training at a Graduate College or University Leading to a Master's Degree or Doctorate; Four–Year Training at a College or University Leading to a Bachelor's Degree or Certified Degree; and Training at a Junior or Community College Leading to an Associate Degree or Certificate

23. Normative Communication No. 2016–05: Transition Services in Accordance to WIOA

24. Normative Communication No. 2016–06: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

The Legislation and Public Policy Committee of the PRSRC was in charge of advancing the appropriate recommendations to the aforementioned Normative Communications.

The PRSRC collaborated with the PRVRA in the development of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment Study of Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities, presented in the State Plan for FY 2015, and prepared by the Graduate School in Rehabilitation Counseling of the University of Puerto Rico. In order to facilitate input from the employer's sector PRVRA collaborated with the PRSRC to conduct a supplementary study where the needs of the employers were heard in order to identify strategies and develop the objectives to be included in the Unified Plan. The PRSRC carried out such study through convening regional forums with employers, which focused on fostering the exchange of information to: assess the demands for employment and labor market trends; identify the needs of the employers in relation to human resources, technical assistance, and

salary incentives; and answer questions and concerns regarding the employment of people with disabilities.

In June 2015, three activities were conducted in collaboration with the Office of Support and Employment Modes (OSEM) and the Centers of Support and Employment Modes (CSEMs) of the PRVRA. The activities were conducted under the title “Forum for Employers: Challenges Faced by Employer Before Functional Diversity.” Eighty–four point sixteen percent (84.16%) of those employers invited attended the activities. The preliminary findings of the forums revealed that employers needed to have a staff with the skills and attitudes meeting the needs of their companies. The report on the findings of the forums will be disclosed to the PRVRA counselors and other regional staff in the second quarter of FY2016.

Executive Order OE–2015–002 was adopted in February 2015, to repeal OE–1993–43 regarding the composition of the State Rehabilitation Council.

Recommendations on the VR services portion of the Unified Plan

Regarding cooperation, collaboration and coordination with other agencies and institutions

The PRSRC recognizes the efforts carried out by the PRVRA to conserve the working agreements with other entities that are components of the statewide workforce investment system. PRSRC’s suggestion is aimed at the collaborative agreement of the PRVRA with the Department of Health. The PRSRC recommends this agreement to strengthen the collaboration of the Department of Health in terms of the provision of extended support services for the consumers who receive supported employment services.

Regarding coordination with education officials

The PRSRC recognizes that this attachment is focused on the provisions of Act 51–1996.

It is suggested that these collaborative agreements are discussed and shared with the Advisory Committees of Special Education so that these, in turn, are afforded the opportunity to react in order to benefit students with disabilities.

Due to the importance of the transition analyst in the meetings of the Programming and Placement Committee (PPC), it is suggested that participation of this professional is ensured in such meetings. It is also recommended that other resources are identified in the regions to support this staff; and that the development of a document is considered, with the signature of the various professionals, indicating that the transition is completed and remains as part of the case record.

We also recommend integrating the analysts of the regional CSEMs, as well as the support staff, the direct service staff, and the consumers of the Centers of Assessment and Adjustment (CAAs), into the orientation efforts and activities that can be carried out for the development of vocational skills, pre–employment skills, and placement of students with disabilities receiving transition services who are eligible to services of the PRVRA.

Regarding procedure for the establishment of agreements with private non–profit organizations

The supported employment services have been impacted by the amendments of Title IV of WIOA. The PRSRC recommends to temper the procedures and the guide to formalize contractual agreements with private nonprofit organizations with the latest changes introduced by the amendments.

Regarding evidence of collaboration to provide supported services for extended employment

PRSRC's recommendations and suggestions to this attachment are as follows:

• To develop uniform procedures for the provision of extended support services.

• To develop collaborative agreements for the provision of extended support with the Department of Family, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the private providers of mental health, and other public or private agencies.

Regarding strategies and progress reports: Statewide Assessment

After reviewing this attachment, the members of the PRSRC recommend the inclusion in this attachment of the research that was sponsored and developed by the Council in collaboration with the PRVRA and the PRDE. This research gave way to innovative and collaborative projects. The findings and results obtained in the years 2006 to 2008 have similarities with the findings of the Comprehensive Assessment Study of Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities prepared by the Graduate School in Rehabilitation Counseling of the UPR. The transition and pre–employment service needs that were identified in both researches are still valid. Based on the results and findings from both researches, as part of the commitments made in the Interagency Agreement of 2007, the PRVRA and the Project Management Office conducted a pilot project of transition in order to develop an interagency collaborative model for these services.

Based on the aforementioned researches and project, the PRSRC understands that there is a need to emphasize on the provision of assessment and adjustment services, instructional skills, independent living skills, vocational and occupational skills, and learning experiences in real and integrated settings of competitive employment. The Council also emphasizes the importance of partnerships and collaborations among all WIOA members in order to develop the pre–employment skills needed in the job world. These services must be provided prior to the exit of the students with disabilities from the school system.

The PRSRC also recommends the following:

• Promote career counseling.

• Integrate supported employment analysts into the Programming and Placement Committee (PPC) when it is foreseen that the student can receive supported employment services.

• Offer orientations on the job market and clinics on pre–placement and employment.

• Develop integrated models of supported employment and transition.

Regarding results of a comprehensive statewide assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities

For FY 2016, the PRSRC will include in its Work Plan the development of an activity for parents in collaboration with the organization “Apoyo a Padres de Niños con Impedimentos” (Support for Parents with Disabled Children), the Special Education Secretariat of the PRDE and the PRVRA. Through this activity, the Council aims to provide guidance on the changes of WIOA in relation to the provision of services to youth with disabilities.

Regarding goals and priorities of the State

Goal 1. WIOA establishes common performance measures for all programs. We suggest the agency to establish an indicator for the number of consumers who retain employment after the closure of case as rehabilitated.

Goal 4. The PRSRC is considering, in its Work Plan 2015–2016, collaborating with the PRVRA in the dissemination of the services provided by the agency. We also expect to conclude the development of the Web page and to strengthen collaborative relationships with the Councils identified in Act 93–112, in order to promote articulated services for the consumers of the PRVRA.

Regarding goals and plans for the distribution of funds Title VI, Part B

The PRVRA indicates that it will strengthen the provision of supported employment services through the provision of training and technical assistance to the staff of the community rehabilitation programs (CRPs). We consider the efforts of the agency to be very successful towards such purposes. Recent research provides a frame of reference to guide the efforts of the PRVRA. The most recent research was conducted by Rosalía Alicea, Michelle Maldonado and Albert Rivera (2010) on Sociodemographic Characteristics, Professional Competences and Training Needs of a Sample of Job Coaches Offering Services in the Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) of Puerto Rico. This research had the purpose of knowing the professional competences and training needs of such job trainers. Fifty–six (56) job trainers who offer services in the CRPs participated in the research. The researchers were interested in learning the professional competences identified by the job trainers in order to perform the essential tasks of the occupation. They identified the following areas in need of training:

Breakdown Training needs identified by job trainers in the CRPs

Training Respondents (%)

Advocacy 89.0

Troubleshooting 69.6

Recruitment and Employment Development 46.4

Task Analysis 33.9

Labor Violation 66.1

Extensive evaluation 53.6

Technical feedback 51.8

Identify and develop support networks 51.8

Individualized Plan 37.5

Interventions Hierarchy Techniques 39.0

Source: PRVRA.

The researchers recommended developing training workshops for job trainers with continuing education courses as well as promoting a professional certification. It is important to point out that the Pontifical Catholic University offers a BA in the rehabilitation field.

The researchers understood that the functions of the job trainer, as described in the research, are of utmost importance largely because on such staff depends that people with significant disabilities are able to achieve a competitive employment outcome.

Regarding strategies of the State

Goal 1, Strategy F. The PRSRC recommends that the PRVRA submits the drafts of the Normative Communications in advance for their review and suggestions. The drafts can be accompanied with instructions concerning deadlines to respond to them without affecting the PRVRA in the implementation of its public policy. The Council will also be available to collaborate with the PRVRA in its participation in the public hearings of those bills impacting the applicants/consumers of the agency.

Goal 3, Strategy B. The PRSRC suggests surveying employers and consumers about the effectiveness of the salary incentives services and about the level of satisfaction with such services. Finally, the PRSRC recommends to continue with the efforts to streamline administrative procedures related to the provision of these services.

Goal 4, Strategy A. The PRSRC will be collaborating and participating in the review of the State Plan for the Rehabilitation Services Program and Supplement for the Supported Employment Services Program, FY 2017.

Assistive Technology, Strategy 4. The PRSRC recognizes the efforts of the PRVRA to access and offer technological assistance services to its consumers through the new units of technological assistance in Arecibo, Ponce, Toa Baja, Caguas and San Germán. It also recognizes the collaborative efforts with the Puerto Rico Assistive Technology Program (PRATP) and other components of WIOA.

The Council endorses all strategies and initiatives related to the components of WIOA. Representatives of the One–Stop Centers have expressed the need to be trained on the services of the PRVRA and other aspects related to the management of various disabling conditions.

Innovation and Expansion, Strategy 5. The PRSRC congratulates the agency for advancing a strategy in accordance with the spirit of the law.

Regarding evaluation and progress reports on the use of Title I funds, activities innovation and expansion

The PRSRC is aware that employment for people with disabilities has been affected by the economic situation and labor market conditions. It is urgent and necessary to keep emphasizing on innovative strategies. The Council reiterates the need to continue with the efforts of the PRVRA to strengthen the provision of services, in regular employment and supported employment; and thus promote entrepreneurship in those consumers that meet the profile to receive rehabilitation services towards economic self–management.

The PRSRC also recommends that the Office of Projects Management of the PRVRA assesses the feasibility of conducting a research with the PRATP on the scope of teleworking.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL'S INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS; AND

The PRVRA appreciates the input made by the PRSRC to the State Plan. Obtaining accurate information on situations that affect recruitment by employers of our consumers, through the "Forums for Employers," sponsored by the Council strengthened the strategies shown here. The forums were attended by 101 employers and the PRVRA was able to validate Goal 3 of this State Plan as well as one of the priorities of the federal regulations set forth in WIOA.

The PRVRA welcomes the recommendations of the PRSRC to the State Plan and presents the following reactions:

Regarding coordination with education officials

The PRVRA has achieved a working relationship with the staff of the PRDE and the Special Education program in order to advance new strategies for the compliance with WIOA. A first interagency encounter was held with the participation of facilitators of the PRDE and transition analysts of the PRVRA. There have been 3 regional activities (Caguas, Bayamón and Mayaguez) aimed at transition–age students and pre–employment and an educational forum with independent living teachers and the PRVRA. These activities were successful in their objectives and efforts will continue. It is necessary that the PRDE disseminate these activities to its agency staff, as well as to other group of professionals who support the efforts in favor of the youth with disabilities.

It is important to mention that the PRVRA is participating in a committee, which is reviewing the documents used by the PRDE in the transition process. However, the implementation of the documents to be used in the transition process corresponds to such agency.

In keeping with the new requirements of WIOA, the PRVRA has taken compliance measures such as the public policy (Normative Communication No. 2016–05), which integrates analysts of the Centers of Support and Employment Modes (CSEMs) and of the Centers of Assessment and Adjustment (CAAs) in the transition processes. For this purpose, codes were issued to demonstrate this participation. In addition, the 6 regions were visited in order to provide orientation to all counselors and supervisory staff on these changes. On the other hand, the PRVRA will continue carrying out efforts for the participation of its staff in the meetings of the PPC.

Regarding procedure for the establishment of agreements with private non–profit organizations and evidence of collaboration to provide support services for extended employment

The PRVRA is developing public policy to provide the extended support service through a protocol structured and directed by the CSEMs. The CRPs are being used to offer such service. Both guides

and protocols were reviewed. WIOA amendments do not affect the contractual agreement between the CRPs and PRVRA stipulated in the attachment. The “fee for services” model is used and this helps in that the services provision process is not tied to 18 months.

Regarding comprehensive statewide needs assessment results of rehabilitation needs of people with disabilities

For the purpose of complying with the new WIOA requirement in terms of including information on the evaluation of transition service and pre–employment transition services needs, the PRVRA is using information as recent as possible, as the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) must be updated every three years. Theses of Rehabilitation Counseling students were used as reference for the identification of said needs. This information is in accordance with the findings of the still current CSNA, which are reflected in the portion of the PRVRA of the Unified State Plan.

Regarding goals and priorities of the State

Goal 1. The PRVRA will establish a percentage of performance, as required by Appendix 1, which will be negotiated later with the Rehabilitation Services Administration. For the first year, those indicators will be baselines.

Regarding strategies of the State

It has been a year of many achievements and many challenges. The PRVRA is immersed in the preparation of new public policy and in the review of the existing one in order to adjust it to the new amendments introduced to the Rehabilitation Act. The common end for the Unified Plan will be to provide citizen services focused on the workforce development of the country, without duplicity of efforts and in our case, with the intention of positioning the person with disabilities under equal conditions for preparing, obtaining, maintaining and growing in an employment compatible with his skills and abilities.

3. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT’S EXPLANATIONS FOR REJECTING ANY OF THE COUNCIL’S INPUT OR RECOMMENDATIONS.

The only recommendation rejected is the inclusion, as part of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment Study, of a research conducted from 2006 to 2008 about the transition process. The agency considers that it is not necessary to incorporate that information in the Needs Assessment section, since it is already mentioned as part of the Council’s input.

B. REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS

When requesting a waiver of the statewideness requirement, the designated State unit must identify the types of services to be provided by the program on a non-statewide basis. The waiver request must also include written assurances that:

1. A LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCY WILL PROVIDE THE NON-FEDERAL SHARE OF COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WAIVER REQUEST;

Not applicable.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL APPROVE EACH PROPOSED SERVICE BEFORE IT IS PUT INTO EFFECT; AND

Not applicable.

3. ALL STATE PLAN REQUIREMENTS WILL APPLY

requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan will apply to the services approved under the waiver.

Not applicable.

C. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES NOT CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM.

Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the servivces and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system with respect to:

1. FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS;

The PRVRA has collaborative agreements with the following agencies, corporations and programs that are not part of the statewide workforce investment system:

University of Puerto Rico

The PRVRA coordinates the placement in its own agency of internship as well as practicum students of the Master's Degree program in Rehabilitation Counseling. These students are a potential human resource to be recruited once their professional credentials are completed. Also, an agreement was established with this academic institution to carry out the Comprehensive Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs 2013-2014.

The PRVRA has VR counselors placed in the facilities of the Río Piedras and Mayagüez campuses of the UPR for the provision of services to eligible students. The PRVRA also maintains a collaborative agreement with the Humacao campus of the UPR for the practicum of occupational therapy students in our facilities.

Office of the Advocate of the Persons with Disabilities

The PRVRA maintains a collaborative agreement with this office to participate in the Governor's Committee Pro-Employment of Persons with Disabilities. Legislation and strategies can be promoted in this committee to improve the quality of life and services to persons with disabilities.

Department of Veterans Affairs

The PRVRA participates in activities and meetings coordinated by this agency, in order to offer referred eligible veterans with disabilities access to the various services available to achieve competitive employment.

State Insurance Fund Corporation

The PRVRA maintains a Contractual Agreement of Comprehensive Action for the Rehabilitation of Injured Workers under the SIFC. Act 182-1951, as amended, authorizes the SIFC to invest in the vocational rehabilitation of its beneficiaries who have disabilities for work. The PRVRA receives an annual allocation of funds of $600,000, which is used to match federal funds.

Institute of Developmental Disabilities

The PRVRA maintains collaboration with and representation in the IDD in order to meet the service needs of the population with developmental disabilities. It has participated in activities aimed at the population with autism, which were coordinated by the IDD.

State Independent Living Council (SILC)

The PRVRA, SILC and independent living centers promote collaborative actions with other public or private organizations that offer services to the population with significant disabilities. They also join efforts to increase the opportunities for community support services for such population. The Normative Communication No. 2011-19 establishes the referral procedure to the independent living centers of those disabled persons who are not eligible for services under Title I, but who could benefit from services provided in such centers. The PRVRA allocates funds to the SILC for its operations under the Innovation and Expansion Section.

Department of Health - Division of Services for People with Intellectual Disability (DSPID)

The DSPID is based on a Community-Based Service Plan, whose main focus is the deinstitutionalization of people with intellectual disabilities. The PRVRA and DSPID maintain a collaborative agreement that facilitates referrals from the latter to the PRVRA. At the same time, the PRVRA offers orientation to the staff of the DSPID and provides services to referred individuals who are eligible.

Caribbean Planning and Work Incentive Assistance Program

The PRVRA will refer to this program those consumers who are beneficiaries of the Social Security Disability Insurance in order to receive the counseling service needed for benefits planning.

Private IHEs and Non-Profits

Carlos Albizu University. The PRVRA maintains a collaborative agreement with this university for the practicum of psychology students in our facilities.

Bayamón Central University, Catholic University of Puerto Rico. The PRVRA maintains collaborative agreements with these universities for the placement in our facilities of practicum and internship students of Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and Bachelor's Degree in Rehabilitation.

Interamerican University. The PRVRA maintains collaborative agreements with this university for the practicum of occupational therapy students in our facilities.

Pathstone Corporation. The PRVRA maintains an agreement with this corporation in order to refer consumers who could benefit from their services, which are aimed at the provision of assistance to farmworkers and their families to improve their employment conditions.

2. STATE PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

The PRVRA has representation in the Advisory Council of the PRATP in order to exchange professional knowledge and to continue referring consumers who could benefit from services such as building and adaptation of equipment, among others.

The Assistive Technology Advisory Council of Puerto Rico (PRATP, by its acronym in Spanish) is composed by members representing government agencies and people with disabilities representing the public interest. PRVRA's participation in that Council is mandatory. The main function of the

Council is to respond and represent people with disabilities for the establishment, implementation and evaluation of the Program, in order to facilitate information, availability and access to assistive technology (AT). The Director of the PRVRA's Avaluation and Adjustment Office is the agency's representative at the Council. VRA's participation consists in attending meetings to:

- Provide information to facilitate changes or current processes improvement for AT service delivery to people with disabilities
- Facilitate coordination of VRA consumers in the AT Annual Needs Assessment
- Offer recommendations for plan development in order to address AT needs, plans implementation and results evaluation
- Share with members of the Council information about training opportunities on AT topics (forums, symposiums, conferences, etc.)
- Share information about local and federal legislation regarding AT services

3. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

At the moment, the Puerto Rico PRVRA is not using services, facilities or a program carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the US Department of Agriculture; nor is utilizing services and facilities of agencies and programs with respect to state use contracting programs. However, the PRVRA has an agreement with Pathstone, a program that provides services to agriculture workers, and refers PRVRA consumers who can benefit from those services.

4. NONEDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH; AND

Coordination was initiated with the Job Corps in order to establish a collaborative agreement. The purpose of this agreement between PRVRA and Job-Corps (JC) is to serve out-of school youth who may benefit from services of one or both programs and establishes the following:

- PRVRA will refer to Job Corps out-of-school youth who might benefit from their services (including training), and Job Corps will also refer individuals to PRVRA.
- PRVRA will send to JC reports about eligibility determination on those referrals.
- JC may provide information/training to VRA staff regarding services available at JC and any other topic identified or beneficial to both parties.
- PRVRA and JC will provide services island wide, according to their resources by which the PRVRA receives referrals of youth with disabilities who might be eligible to services. At the same time, the PRVRA could refer consumers to the programs of Job Corps.

5. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS.

Not applicable.

D. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

Describe:

1. DSU'S PLANS

The designated State unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services, including pre-employment transition services, as well as procedures for the timely development and approval of individualized plans for employment for the students.

In Puerto Rico, Act 51–1996, as amended, provides for the coordination between the Assistant Secretariat of Comprehensive Educational Services for Persons with Disabilities of the PRDE, and the PRVRA, among other agencies. In terms of the public policy and practices for the development and implementation of the IPE, the PRVRA has established a protocol in accordance with federal regulations (34 CFR 361.22(a)(2)). Before the student with disabilities exits the school system, a Written Intervention Plan (WIP), or IPE, must be developed. Its purpose is to formalize the management of the VR services provision process in coordination with educational agencies. This plan includes:

• Application of guides and programmatic procedures for the provision of services

• Beginning and ending date of services

• Employment outcomes (regular employment, supported employment, self–employment or any other innovative option)

• Projected date for the achievement of the employment outcome

• Analysis to evidence the functional limitations of the consumer in relation to the employment outcome, outcomes of informed choice and the programmed services

• Recommended VR services which are necessary to achieve the selected employment outcomes • Comparable services and benefits

• Costs of services

• Evidence of the financial participation negotiated between the VR counselor with the consumer/family, as applicable

• Evaluative criteria

• Specific responsibilities of the PRVRA

• Responsibilities of the consumer/representative

• Coordination with educational agencies

• Signatures of the parties and dates when plan is developed and approved

• Evidence in the IPE of the participation of the consumer (his own words) regarding the informed choice process, self–management, and others actions taken during his VR process

In addition, the IPE contains those transition services that could be provided to the disabled student, under the sponsorship of the PRVRA, while participating from the educational services of the PRDE, and after exhausting the available comparable services and benefits. The following is a description of such services:

• Career exploration

• Vocational counseling

• Orientation, postsecondary education (university level options and summer camp programs, among others)

• Assessment of vocational interests, capabilities and pre–employment skills

• Evaluation with an ecological approach

• Workshops and job readiness orientation (job skills, job interviews and drafting of a resume, among others)

• Vocational training/post–secondary education

• Supported employment services

• Transportation, including training on the use of public transportation

• Mentoring

• Self–management

• Use of auxiliary aids and services (assistive technology equipment/devices and services)

The activities regarding shared responsibilities under the interagency agreement between the PRVRA and the PRDE can be described as follows:

• During each school year, the transition analysts carry out visits to various schools for the provision of orientation to the school staff, students and parents on VR services, eligibility criteria and referral process to the PRVRA.

• The PRDE shares basic information on the disabled student, in accordance with the confidentiality criteria established under federal/state laws and regulations.

• The transition analyst participates in the meetings of the Programming and Placement Committee; receives the referral from the PRDE and channels it to the VR counselor, who determines eligibility/ineligibility to VR services.

• The VR counselor informs to the transition analyst, in writing, the determination taken in regard to the referred student. Then, the transition analyst informs the outcome of said determination to the school official.

• The VR counselor evaluates the disabled youth's capability towards the achievement of either an employment outcome or a more independent living.

• The VR counselor, with the participation of the disabled youth, his family or representative, develops the IPE; in accordance with the needs of the youth and taking into consideration the services included in the WIP or IPE prior to his exit of the school system.

• The transition analyst gathers statistical data showing the following: orientations provided to school staff, students and parents; meetings of the Programming and Placement Committee; students referred to the PRVRA by the PRDE; and eligible students.

• The transition analyst participates, if necessary, in the drafting of the IEP by recommending areas to be worked on during the transition stages. The PRVRA recognizes the importance of the transition process in the youth with disabilities and will maintain its commitment in that it is carried out in accordance with federal and state regulations.

The PRVRA is developing with the PRDE joint activities in order to strengthen the provision of transition services in general, and especially the pre–employment services to those youth with the most significant disabilities, as stated in WIOA.

2. INFORMATION ON THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY WITH RESPECT TO:

A. CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO ASSIST EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES IN PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO POST-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING VR SERVICES;

As mentioned in the previous section, Act 51–1996, as amended, provides for the coordination between the Assistant Secretariat of Comprehensive Educational Services for Persons with Disabilities of the PRDE, and the PRVRA, among other agencies. The purpose of such coordination is to ensure the transition of youth with disabilities from the PRDE to the PRVRA. This Assistant Secretariat is also responsible for the implementation of Public Law 108–446, as amended, known as the Individuals with Disabilities and Education Act (IDEA).

The PRVRA maintains communication with the aforementioned Assistant Secretariat in order to develop new strategies between agencies that result in a better provision of services. Some of the roles and responsibilities of both agencies established by law are the following:

Department of Education

• Identify the population to be referred for evaluation of the agencies concerned, according to eligibility criteria established by laws and regulations, through the procedure agreed by the agencies in the Interagency Manual for the Provision of Transition Services from School to Adult Life and Working World.

• Offer and coordinate the provision of necessary services for the transition process to the post–school life.

• Coordinate so that officials of agencies included in this agreement are able to provide orientation on the services offered by those agencies to the parents, the students and the school staff.

• Provide academic and vocational services to the population with disabilities in accordance with federal and state laws and regulations.

• Collaborate with the other subscribing agencies in their objective of providing services related to job placement and follow up in employment to the students until they reach 21 years of age or graduate from high school.

• Provide, through schools, the human resource for the development of necessary basic academic and occupational skills, according to the needs identified in vocational evaluation results and in accordance with the provisions of the IPE.

• Provide those related support and assistive technology services required for the achievement of the educational objectives of the student in the environment or school setting.

• Evaluate, together with the staff of the agencies included in this agreement, the achievements in the implementation of such cooperative agreement.

Vocational Rehabilitation Administration

• Evaluate, through the VR counselor, referred cases to determine eligibility to services, as set forth in state and federal guidelines.

• Design an IPE in accordance with the needs of persons with disabilities and current regulations.

• Collaborate and participate in the drafting and implementation of the transition plan into adulthood whenever appropriate.

The PRVRA is part of a Cooperative Agreement between the PRDOLHR and the PRDE for the Provision of Transition Services from School to Work, currently in force since May 2009. The agencies subscribing the agreement agreed to coordinate and execute the following:

• Establish an Interagency Committee with representation from both agencies that will meet regularly to provide follow up to the implementation of transition services.

• Consult and exchange information on the contents of the state plans of the subscribing agencies.

• Promote training to the staff of each agency and among agencies, as well as technical assistance for the development of transition projects.

• Foster the development of proposals that promote the acquisition of additional resources to strengthen the transition services and postsecondary school activities.

• Promote the mechanisms for the provision of integrated services.

• Carry out dissemination activities to promote the transition services for youth with disabilities, and how parents or guardians, organizations, advocacy groups and other support groups will contribute during the transition process.

• Include in the annual budgetary petition of each agency, the request of necessary funds to comply with the provisions of those laws and regulations applicable to the transition process.

• When any the subscribing agencies have the need to provide and pay for services or commitments that, under existing laws and agreements fall under the responsibility of the other agency, which did not provide these, the agency that provided the services can request a reimbursement of its expenses to the concerned agency. If this agency does not respond within 30 days or considers the reimbursement inappropriate, any of the two parties can use the established procedure for the resolution of controversies.

• Both agencies are part of the Interagency Advisory Committee for the development and implementation of the transition services provision manual. During meetings of this committee, the PRVRA provides technical assistance related to the services provision process. In addition, the transition analysts of the PRVRA regions provide individual and group orientation to the school staff, students and parents on the services of the PRVRA, as well as on the activities that can be performed for the development of vocational skills and independent living skills. They also provide technical assistance to school staff requesting it.

• The schools are responsible of convening the VR counselors on time so that they can plan the participation in the Placement and Programming Committee (PPC), in order to ensure the continuity in the provision of services to the disabled youth as well as to develop the IPE before such youth exists the school system.

B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS;

Please, refer to previous section.

C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES;

Please, refer to section d.2.

D. PROCEDURES FOR OUTREACH TO AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO NEED TRANSITION SERVICES.

1. Transition process for students with disabilities begins at schools through orientation provided by the Transition Counselor (TC) of the VRA, to teachers, students with disabilities and/or parents. As a result, meetings of the Placement and Programming Committee (PPC) take place, and decisions are made about IPE recommendations. A plan of action is developed and the TC may accept the referral of the student with disabilities.

2. The PPC compiles medical information related to the student’s disability and functional level at the time of the referral.

3. The TC sends those referrals to the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC) at the corresponding VRA regional office and coordinates VRC participation in PPC meetings of eligible students with disabilities.

4. When existing information doesn’t describe the current functional level of the student, the VRC will perform a preliminary evaluation and consult with the TC as to which evaluations may be available through the Department of Education to complete the evaluation process.

5. The VRC requests medical consultant’s opinion under the following situations:a. When advice is needed about functional limitations caused by the student’s physical or mental disabilityb. When clarification about medical aspects of disability is needed to facilitate VRC decision making process and service planning. Eligibility determination is made by the VRC.

6. Eligibility criteria will be applied considering physical and mental functional limitations, functional capacity, vocational interests, skills, abilities, life experiences and others, identified through the evaluation stages for eligibility determination.

E. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.8(b)(3)). Describe the manner in which the designated State agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit VR service providers.

The PRVRA reviewed, during FY 2014, the procedure and guide to formalize contractual agreements with private nonprofit organizations. The procedure is described in the Proposal Guide to Apply for Subsidy to Offer Services to the Consumers of the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration. The agency publishes in the local press a public notice on request for proposals and provides orientation on the guidelines to those organizations interested in submitting proposals.

Currently, the PRVRA maintains contractual agreements with community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) for the provision of supported employment services to consumers with the most significant disabilities. In the proposals for the provision of supported employment, these organizations describe aspects such as: activities to be carried out, evaluation plan or instruments to be used to measure success of the project, number of consumers to be served, how the organization will comply with the placement and job retention percentage, if it has a network of employers as a source of employment or for ecological evaluations, duration of the project, amount of funds requested and in–kind share.

The activities to be developed must be consistent with the five stages of the supported employment service:

• Stage 1: Determination of needs

• Stage 2: Vocational preparation–supplementary assessment

• Stage 3: Placement services

• Stage 4: Training and job retention

• Intensive Phase • Moderate Phase

• Stage 5: Stabilization and closure

The organization will identify its resources in accordance with its responsibility and activity to be carried out; as well as to make evident the coordination with other agencies and community organizations for the planning of services in an integrated way.

It will develop evaluation criteria for each one of the activities designed. These activities must measure levels of independence, integration, inclusion and productivity achieved by consumers. It will also describe measurably the outcomes to be achieved or reached during the duration of the project and how the proposed project will help to reduce or minimize the employment problems and others (specifically of the geographical area to be served) identified in the Justification section of the Proposal Guide.

The PRVRA, through its staff of the Office of Support and Employment Modes (OSEM), will carry out two programmatic monitoring visits during the term of the contract. In the preliminary monitoring visit, progress of the organization will be observed and the final monitoring will determine if the organization complied with all established goals. In addition, the staff of the OSEM as well as

support and employment modes' analysts, provide technical assistance to the CRPs, when necessary, throughout the services provision process.

Approval of Proposals

All proposals received in the PRVRA will be analyzed and reviewed by the Evaluation Committee of Proposals, which utilizes the instrument (Form for the Evaluation of Proposals/Request of Title I Funds from the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as Amended) designed to grant points in accordance with an evaluation criteria scale which adjudicates a final punctuation to all submitted proposals. Those approved proposals will be considered for the awarding of contracts.

In compliance with the established federal regulations, the PRVRA assigns to its programmatic areas, the responsibility to carry out monitoring activities to the contracted organizations in order to verify: compliance, development of the project, services being offered, encountered difficulties, use of resources, and participation of beneficiaries, among others.

The PRVRA is receptive to establish collaborative agreements with other nonprofit organizations that provide services to people with disabilities in order to receive referrals and offer training to agency staff.

F. ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.8(b)(4)). Describe the designated State agency's efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services and extended employment services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

The PRVRA continues collaborating with other private nonprofit organizations to ensure the availability of supported employment services and the development of extended support services to the consumers with the most significant disabilities. For this purpose, it carries out contractual agreements with several community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) Island-wide. At the same time, these CRPs contracted for the provision of supported employment services have the responsibility of identifying and developing groups of parents, volunteers and other community entities that provide the extended support needed by consumers after the conclusion of the provision of services from the PRVRA and the CRP.

The PRVRA will continue with the contacting of the CRPs for the provision of supported employment services. In addition, it will establish the procedure for the provision of extended support services to be offered by the CRPs. It will also continue to carry out the following activities:

• Offer technical assistance to employers, when requested, to promote extended support options through orientation activities to employees/coworkers interested in collaborating with the process; and to identify available resources in the workplace and community.

• Collaborate with the CRPs, if required, in the efforts to prepare and submit proposals to other available sources of funding for the provision of extended services. In the proposals submitted by the CRPs to the PRVRA, compliance measurement criteria are established in the provision of services. In addition, the job placement of consumers must comply with those quality standards of supported employment (interests/capabilities of the consumer, competitive pay, work day, integration, and continuous support, among others). The PRVRA carries out monitoring interventions to ensure the quality of services and its outcomes.

PRVRA, through the Office of Support and Employment Modes, is coordinating and conducting visits to temporary employment agencies to explore the possibility of agreements for employment experiences, including work based learning experiences, for youth and students with disabilities received from Transition.

PRVRA also released a public announcement to allow community organizations to submit proposals for Supported Employment Services.

Extended support services will be provided by coordination with the CRP through the Support and Employment Modes Analysts of the VRA. Services Auhorizations will be created in the case management system.

G. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.8(b)(5)). Describe how the designated State unit will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of:

1. VR SERVICES; AND

The PRVRA continues working with employers to identify integrated competitive employment opportunities and career exploration. To that end, it has Centers of Support and Employment Modes (CSEMs), whose staff is in charge of working with employers. Such staff contacts potential employers, as well as those who are employing people with disabilities, in order to promote employment opportunities and make available their facilities for evaluation activities and career exploration.

The CSEMs also organize training activities for employers, by which knowledge is increased in regard to the population with disabilities and the benefits of employing them, among other topics. In addition, the CSEMs participate in job fairs where information is provided on the services of the PRVRA and where qualified candidates are marketed.

On the other hand, as part of the MOU with the One–Stop Centers, the PRVRA will stipulate that the centers share their network of employers, so that they can be contacted by staff of the CSEMs to facilitate the provision of rehabilitation and transition services that are necessary.

The PRSRC also supports the efforts of the PRVRA to contact employers through the membership in the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), Puerto Rico Chapter.

2. TRANSITION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES.

PRVRA in coordination with the SRC performed Forums for Employers (three forums, two regions each). The purpose was to provide orientation to employers about PRVRA services and obtain feedback about their experiences with employees with disabilities. We were also able to identify employer needs to continue strengthening communication between them and the VRA by region. To reach more employers, the Centers of Support and Employment Modes (CSEM) and the Office of Support and Employment Modes (OSEM) will continue to offer orientations by region to different sectors: businesses, industrial and government. We expect to obtain from those employers collaboration to identify competitive integrated employment and carrer exploration opportunities. Evaluation and Adjustment Centers staff of the PRVRA also perform work based evaluation processes for applicants/consumers of the VRA, including youth with disabilities, and will continue to do so with employers collaboration.

Transition Analysts will support CSEM/OSEM to identify more schools that offer services to students and youth with the most significant disabilities as possible candidates for Supported Employment services.

H. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

Describe how the designated State unit will collaborate with the State agency responsible for administering each of the following programs to develop opportunities for competitive integrated employment, to the greatest extent practicable:

1. THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT;

Recently the PRVRA was able to established contact with the Director of the Policies/Procedures and Operations of the Medicaid Program under the Department of Health, administering the Medicaid under Title XIX of the Social Security Act. We agree on having a meeting before the end of 2016, in order to develop a formal MOU. As part of it, the Medicaid staff can provide VRA staff with information about the program and also orientations to help them identify individuals with disabilities not receiving services from Medicaid that may be potential beneficiaries. Receiving needed services from Medicaid is a way to provide adequate conditions to benefit from the vocational rehabilitation process to achieve competitive integrated employment.

2. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES; AND

The PRVRA participates actively in the meetings of the SCDD, as well in activities that promote employment opportunities for this population. It also shared its employers' list with the SCDD and put at their disposal staff of the PRVRA to support their efforts in order to develop integrated competitive employment opportunities.

3. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

This Advisory Council of Substance Abuse and Mental Health of Puerto Rico is composed of government agencies, mental health patients and family members. It is supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (ASSMCA, by its Spanish acronym). This is the organization selected by the Health Insurance Administration of Puerto Rico to carry out operational functions of the Health Plan and offer treatment for mental health conditions, alcohol and drug abuse in the San Juan and Western regions. The PRVRA is a mandatory member of this council and participates in the planning for the provision of these services.

PRVRA participates as a member of the Advisory Council of Substance Abuse and Mental Health of Puerto Rico. The Council's mission is to promote compliance with federal public law and the public policy of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, in order to offer adequate mental health and substance abuse services and promote a better quality of life for people and their families. The Council's objectives are to:

1. Participate in the writing and implementation of the Block Grant, in accordance with Section 1915 9a) of the federal law.2. Participate in the development of the State Plan for the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Administration.3. Review and evaluate adequacy and distribution of mental health and substance abuse services in PR to identify service needs.4. Advocate for people with mental health and substance abuse disabilities in PR, in order to guarantee establishment of a high quality integrated service system.

Functions of each member, including PRVRA, are:1. Attend meetings2. Active participation in deliberation and vote processes3. Staying informed and updated about interests issues for mental health and substance abuse services improvements4. Participate in activities and perform assigned tasks5. Participate in the Council's working groups

Every situation regarding an applicant/consumer is managed with the corresponding member. Annually, the PRVRA submits to the Council a report of mental health impairments attended in the Agency. On the other hand, cases with mental health conditions may request PRVRA services as self-applicants or through "Atención Primaria de Salud" (APS, by its acronym in Spanish), which are companies contracted by the Health Insurance Administration to offer mental health and substance abuse services to beneficiaries of the Government Health Care Insurance.

The VR Counselor maintains contact with the APS social workers or case manager in order to offer integrated services, including public health actions such as: diagnostic, prevention, and occupational services by the VRA.

I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT; DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.10)). Describe the designated State agency's procedures and activities to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel for the designated State unit, including the following:

1. DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

A. QUALIFIED PERSONNEL NEEDS.

Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs with respect to:

i. the number of personnel who are employed by the State agency in the provision of VR services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;

The PRVRA's institutional mission is to provide VR services aimed at the successful integration of people with disabilities into the labor force and towards the enjoyment of a more independent living. With that purpose, the agency has professionals committed with public service, duly qualified to meet, in an agile and responsive way, the VR and independent living needs of people with disabilities, with priority to the needs of those with the most significant disabilities.

In order to ensure that we have the best qualified and fully trained personnel to provide services to people with disabilities, we offer professional development opportunities to our human resources. We also take into consideration their needs and recommendations for the best performance of the agency.

As of September 30 of 2015, the PRVRA had a payroll of 823 employees to serve 85% (46,922) of the population projected to attend to (55,202) during FY 2017. In order to articulate the operation of the agency in response to the needs of the population attended, the PRVRA requires professional staff related to the rehabilitation field occupying different positions, as well as other support and administrative staff. The support professionals also provide direct service to the applicant/consumer; while the administrative ones contribute to the continuity of other processes needed for the operation of the agency and the achievement of its programmatic goals.

During FY 2015, the PRVRA succeeded in attending a population of 59, 170 in 152 work zones for an average caseload of 338 cases.

BREAKDOWN COUNSELORS AND NEW WORK ZONES

Fiscal Year|Total zones in the period|New zones|New VR counselors

2015*|152|0|17

2014|152|0|11

2013|153|2|7

2012|151|9|14

Total:|11|49

* FY2015: preliminary data.

It is estimated that in one year the average caseload will be between 300–325 cases.

BREAKDOWN AVERAGE CASELOADS FOR CRV, 2010–2014

Fiscal year|Number of zones|Active caseload|Cases closed|Population served|Average caseload

2015*|152|51,382|7,788|59,170|338

2014|152|47,937|7,234|55,171|315

2013|153|42,653|6,652|49,305|279

2012|151|37,312|7,050|44,362|247

The PRVRA is strengthening its work teams to provide agile and responsive services to the needs of people with disabilities. At the moment, the agency has 149 VR counselors managing cases. To provide other services needed in the rehabilitation process (assessment and employment–related services, among others), the agency has 393 support staff.

The following section shows a breakdown of PRVRA staff, by category, vacancies and projected employees who qualify for retirement over the next (5) years:

DESCRIPTION OF PRVRA STAFF

Staff category|Total positions|Current vacancies|Projected vacancies (5 years)

Counseling staff|149|10|0

Support staff |393|45|4

Administrative staff|280|69|6

Other staff|1|0|0

TOTAL|823|124|10

Source: PRVRA, 2015.

ii. the number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and

Section (i) 1.A. includes a table with current and projected vacancies.

iii. projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the State agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

Please, refer to section i.1.A.i.

B. PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on personnel development with respect to:

i. a list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program;

Puerto Rico has various institutions of higher education that are preparing professionals in the rehabilitation field. The PRVRA has agreements with three (3) universities that prepare professionals in the rehabilitation counseling field. The purpose of such agreements is to provide the students the opportunity to carry out their practicum in facilities of our agency. In addition, the PRVRA recruits graduates from these institutions, particularly from the following:

• University of Puerto Rico (UPR)– is the only public institution of higher education in the country. It has its main campus in Río Piedras with 10 off–campus sites throughout the Island. At the Río Piedras Campus, Graduate Program in Rehabilitation Counseling– 57 enrolled students and 14 graduates. Staff category: Counseling

• UPR, Medical Sciences Campus– 481 enrolled students and 145 graduates in the following programs: Occupational Therapy (13 graduates); Physical Therapy (18 graduates); Master's degree in Speech Pathology (13 graduates); and Nursing (101 graduates). Staff category: Support

• Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico (Ponce)– 79 enrolled students and 13 graduates in the Graduate Program in Rehabilitation Counseling. Staff category: Counseling

• Bayamón Central University– 334 enrolled students and 95 graduates in the following programs: Graduate Program in Rehabilitation Counseling. Staff category: Counseling

• Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Psychology; Bachelor's degree in Social Work; and Vocational Rehabilitation Certification. Staff category: Support

• Turabo University– 24 enrolled students and 7 graduates in the Certification and/or Bachelor's degree in Sign Language. Staff category: Support

ii. the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and

Please, refer to previous section.

iii. the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of theose institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the

personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

Please, refer to section i.1.B.i.

2. PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL

Describe the development and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated State unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

The PRVRA, through the Office of Labor Affairs and Human Resources and its divisions, has the responsibility of developing, updating and implementing a plan for the recruitment, preparation and retention of qualified personnel to meet current and projected needs of staff. To comply with such requirement, the agency will continue with the development of the following procedures and activities:

• Identification and communication of needs concerning the recruitment, reclassification, training or any other requirement related to human resources

• Analysis and development of strategies based on the needs concerning the recruitment, reclassification, training or any other requirement related to human resources

• Realignment of personnel to fill vacant positions in the centers providing services to consumers (centers offering VR counseling services, assessment and adjustment, support and employment modes). Although this strategy responds to the current public policy of economic austerity, it also propitiates the development of employees while taking care of the staff needs of the agency

• Offering of advice and support on issues concerning the best use of human resources, particularly those assigned to the provision of direct services to meet the needs of the consumers

• Provision of advice and support on issues concerning the management of human resources of the agency, maintaining a close coordination with the programmatic area of the agency

• Planning and provision of human resources (involves the analysis; design; establishment and elimination of positions; selection and recruitment; and the implementation of a system of personnel evaluation)

• Maintenance of a human resources inventory that involves the classification of positions, existing vacancies, identification of candidates for retirement and succession planning. This information is analyzed on an annual basis to determine employment patterns, positions that are hard to hire and number of employees with 25 or more years of service

• Forecasting of human resources needs (within a period of 1 to 5 years), by number and type of employee, emphasizing on the personnel that offers direct services to people with disabilities

• Maintenance of an updated compensation plan

• Provision of training and promotion of staff development

• Establishment of objectives and training activities to be offered to staff in order to comply with programmatic/administrative commitments of the agency

• Coordination of staff training activities with universities and other institutions preparing professionals related to the rehabilitation field

• Maintenance of efforts to continue recruiting qualified staff with disabilities. The PRVRA has VR counselors who have various disabilities. It also continues emphasizing on compliance with Law 81, as amended, known as the Law of Equal Employment Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities. As part of the evaluation of examination requests, five (5) additional points are granted to anyone who shows evidence of having some type of disabling condition

The PRVRA recruits without distinction of age, race, color, gender, social or national origin, and social condition, political or religious beliefs. Our agency recruits based on qualifications of applicant. The Puerto Rico PRVRA is the only Designated State Unit of the nation where more than 99% of its population is minority (Hispanic and/or Spanish-speaking).

The PRVRA has agreements with three (3) universities that prepare professionals in the rehabilitation counseling field. The purpose of such agreements is to provide the students the opportunity to carry out their practicum in facilities of our agency. In addition, the PRVRA recruits graduates from these institutions, particularly from the following: University of Puerto Rico (UPR), Pontifical Catholic University of PR (Ponce), and Bayamón Central University, among others. Training is provided to VR staff through: College of RC Professional of PR, National Council of Rehabilitation Education (NCRE), American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association, to name a few. For more details, see sections (i) 1.B and (i) 3. B.

3. PERSONNEL STANDARDS

Describe the State agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B) and 34 CFR 361.18(c) to ensure that designated State unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

A. STANDARDS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH ANY NATIONAL OR STATE-APPROVED OR -RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATION, LICENSING, REGISTRATION, OR OTHER COMPARABLE REQUIREMENTS THAT APPLY TO THE PROFESSION OR DISCIPLINE IN WHICH SUCH PERSONNEL ARE PROVIDING VR SERVICES; AND

In Puerto Rico, the rehabilitation counseling profession is regulated by Law 58 of May 7 of 1976, as amended, known as the Regulatory Law of the Rehabilitation Counseling Profession in Puerto Rico. This legislation establishes that in order to practice as a rehabilitation counselor, the person must have a Master’s degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and a current state license issued by the appropriate Board of Examiners. It is also required that the professional maintains active his credentials and licenses in the Professional Registry of the Office of Regulation and Certification of Health Professionals, be a member of the College of Rehabilitation Counseling Professionals of

Puerto Rico, and comply with hours of continuing education. The PRVRA recruits personnel who meet these requirements in order to ensure the highest standards of the rehabilitation counseling profession.

Similarly, certification or license is required as a condition for employment, benefits and wages for: teachers, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech/language pathologists, social workers, and psychologists, among others.

B. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, TO ENSURE THAT THE PERSONNEL HAVE A 21ST CENTURY UNDERSTANDING OF THE EVOLVING LABOR FORCE AND THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

The PRVRA has developed the following strategies to maintain personnel standards consistent with the highest state requirements applicable to a specific profession or discipline:

• Annual review of certifications, licenses, and continuing education of specific professions or disciplines

• Continuation with the provision to staff of training necessary for the optimal performance of their duties

• Maintenance of an updated record on training and workshops, and education activities among others, provided to the agency staff

• Identification of retraining needs of the agency staff in order to strengthen the performance of duties

• Annual performance evaluation of the staff

The following is a list of professional associations related to the rehabilitation field available to provide training to staff:

• College of Rehabilitation Counseling Professionals of Puerto Rico– (VR counselors)

• National Council of Rehabilitation Education (NCRE)– (educators in rehabilitation and staff related to the training of rehabilitation professionals, among others)

• American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association– (staff related to services to the deaf) • Association of Persons in Supported Employment (APSE)– (staff related to supported employment services, among others)

• National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)– (staff related to independent living services)

• California State University at Northridge (CSUN)– (VR professionals in assistive technology)

• Rehabilitation Engineering Society of North America (RESNA)– (VR professionals in assistive technology)

• College of Occupational Therapy Professionals of Puerto Rico– (occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants)

• College of Social Work Professionals of Puerto Rico– (social workers)

• Association of Employee Assistance Professionals of Puerto Rico– (central level staff of the Employee Assistance Program)

• Administration of Mental Health and Anti–Addiction Services (ASSMCA, in Spanish)– (staff of the Employee Assistance Program)

• Academy of Audiology of Puerto Rico– (audiologists)

• Puerto Rico Assistive Technology Program (PRATP)– (occupational therapists, speech/language pathologists, and audiologists, among others)

• Puerto Rico Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf– (interpreters for the deaf)

• Puerto Rican Physiotherapy Association– (physical therapists and physical therapy assistants)

4. STAFF DEVELOPMENT.

Describe the State agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that, consistent with section101(a)(7)(C) of the Rehabilitation Act, all personnel employed by the designated State unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:

A. SYSTEM OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT

a system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated State unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and

As established in the Procedures Manual for the Training of All Staff of the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration, the PRVRA promotes and emphasizes on the continuing education of its employees. Therefore, it carries out the following activities to ensure having qualified staff:

• Identification and communication of training needs

• Analysis and development of strategies based on training needs

• Design of training activities to address topics concerning administrative/programmatic issues relevant to the VR program

• Planning of training activities as a result of the needs identified in the needs assessment study, monitoring reports and performance evaluations

The following is a breakdown of some of the training activities offered to the rehabilitation counseling staff and other related professionals during FY 2015:

Breakdown Training activities offered to the rehabilitation counseling staff and other related professionals, FY 2015 Training|Participants ONET and occupational matching (new counselors)|24 Effective supervision|67 Application of results of psychological tests|208 Determination of functional capacity and severity|172 Annual Conference of VR Counselors: 2015|152 Needs study results/State Plan/Performance indicators|186 Time management in the office|160 Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Convention |16 Training for administrative professionals|73 Occupational skills transfer|71 Labor market perspectives|24 Other training activities and conferences|1,095 Total:|2,248 Source: PRVRA, FY 2015.

From February 2014, training to the newly recruited VR counselors was broaden to cover in detail the following aspects: services provision process and federal regulations; assessment and adjustment services; support and employment mode services; productivity indicators; use of the computerized system to provide services; data on the federal RSA-911 Report; fiscal and budgetary aspects of the services provision process; independent living services; and the State Plan. Each topic is presented by the staff of corresponding areas, which allows employees to become familiar with the central office.

Assistive Technology Program (PRATP) established under Act No. 264 of 2000 known as the "Act for the Puerto Rico's Assistive Technology Program" as amended, has the responsibility to promote changes in public and private systems for inclusion, independence and self-sufficiency of people with disabilities through AT use. According to this mandate the PRATP keeps collaborative agreements with government agencies. The PRVRA has maintained agreements with PRATP to exchange resources, knowledge and experiences about AT topics.

PRVRA offered AT services at their six regions under the following categories: visual, hearing , mobility, communication, independent living, cognitive, and computer access. Services are offered by Occupational Therapists, Physical therapists, Audiologists, certified teachers, Speech and Language Pathologists, Blind Services and Visual rehabilitation Specialists. Those professionals have the required credentials. By providing AT services, professionals keep up to date in knowledge. To that effect, the Agency benefits from collaboration with PRATP because their specialists offer trainings to VR staff about topics such as:

- Low, medium and high technology AT equipments
- AT legislation
- AT integration to avaluation and adjustment processes
- AT alternatives for employment and independent living
- AT for specific populations (blind, learning disabilities, mobility impairments)
- New equipment on the market and free equipment alternatives
- Low cost or home made AT equipments alternatives, among others

Those trainings and others provided by the VRA have contributed to keeping VRA staff skills and knowledge updated, having an impact on AT service delivery to applicants/consumers, facilitating employment outcomes and independent living.

B. ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE

procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to designated State unit professionals and paraprofessionals.

For the purpose of acquiring and disseminating significant knowledge of research and other sources to professional and paraprofessional staff of the agency, the PRVRA has established the following procedure:

1. Presentation to staff of the findings of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment Study of Rehabilitation Needs.

2. Send, by internal email, links to articles or information resources related to the rehabilitation field.

3. Agreement with the Graduate School in Rehabilitation Counseling of UPR so that they share with the agency, findings of research studies related to the rehabilitation field.

4. Permission for staff participation in continuing education courses, many of which contain information and strategies based on evidence.

5. PERSONNEL TO ADDRESS INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATION NEEDS

Describe how the designated State unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in appropriate modes of communication with or in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability.

The agency, in its vision to be the lead agency in the provision of services to people with disabilities, provides staff with the necessary training and workshops to meet the communication needs the deaf, blind and deaf/blind applicants/consumers. For this reason, the agency staff participates in training activities related to such communication needs. At the same time, the agency has seven (7) interpreters for the deaf whose services can be used, when necessary, to service applicants or eligible consumers; as well as three (3) interpretations service contracts to meet the communication needs our consumers.

Due to the fact that Puerto Rico is a Spanish–speaking country (English is used as second language), we can communicate in the native language (Spanish) of our applicants/consumers. However, if an applicant/consumer speaks only English, we can also communicate in that language. In addition, the PRVRA can provide clients with alternative formats of communication such as Braille and large print, among others.

The PRVRA installed a video interpretation system through its facilities, which ensure communication with the deaf population, even if the interpreter is not physically present at the place where the applicant/consumer is requesting service.

6. COORDINATION OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

In Puerto Rico, the Assistant Secretariat of Comprehensive Educational Services for Persons with Disabilities and the PRVRA are located in two different state departments (PRDE and PRDOLHR). The first one is responsible for the implementation of Public Law 108–446, as amended, known as

the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA); the second one is responsible for the implementation of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and State Law 97–2000, as amended, known as the Vocational Rehabilitation Law of Puerto Rico. In addition to the aforementioned legislation, we have State Law 51–1996, as amended, known as the Integral Educational Services for Persons with Disabilities, which provides for the coordination to be achieved between various local agencies to ensure an effective transition of disabled youth coming from the Department of Education. Both agencies maintain cooperative ties related to the development of their respective human resources and as such, have been planning, developing, offering and/or participating in numerous in–service training activities since 1987. Some of the topics covered in such training include: transition from school to work; vocational evaluation; supported employment; IDEIA; Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Public Law No. 101–336, as amended; Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Public Law 105–220 of August 7 of 1998, as amended; among others. In addition, both agencies are members of an Advisory Committee, which meets periodically to plan and join efforts in the development and implementation of transition services from school to work.

The efforts and alliances carried out under collaborative agreements with the PRDE, as well as with the PRDOLHR and its components, are conducive to the development of strategies and activities to comply with federal regulations.

The PRVRA has the responsibility to provide follow up to the cooperative link with the PRDE. As part of this commitment, during FY2015, the agency participated in meetings with the Advisory Committee of Special Education.

J. STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.11(a)).

1. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE REHABILITATION NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, PARTICULARLY THE VR SERVICES NEEDS OF THOSE:

A. WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

The Comprehensive Needs Assessment Study of Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities involved the collaboration of the PRSRC, which provided the data used in the survey to the community rehabilitation programs (CRPs), as well as support in the follow up to the information gathering. The study provided the PRVRA findings and recommendations that have been used for the development of goals, priorities and strategies; and considers the vocational rehabilitation service needs in areas such as:

• Individuals with the most significant disabilities

• Individuals with disabilities unserved or underserved

• Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the workforce investment system (WIA)

• Supported employment services

• Establishment, development or improvement of community rehabilitation programs (CRPs)

The staff of the GSRC used different methodologies and research designs. The empirical evidence gathered in the quantitative phase was the result of the administration of survey–type instruments to consumers ready for employment (Status 20 and 22), consumers rehabilitated (Status 26), potential unserved consumers (UC) and licensed VR counselors (VRCs) that at the time of the study were occupying a regular position in any of the facilities of the PRVRA. Similarly, the empirical evidence gathered in the qualitative phase was due to the participation of various sectors in focal groups and structured interviews. Among the sectors convened to participate in focal groups were regional directors, staff of the centers of assessment and adjustment (CAAs), staff of the centers of support and employment modes (CSEMs), directors of vocational rehabilitation counseling service centers (VRCSCs), rehabilitated consumers during this year, and individuals with various types of disabilities who currently receive no PRVRA services but who could benefit from the same. A structured interview was also conducted with staff of the CRPs, which subcontract services with the PRVRA.

Synthesis of findings of the comprehensive needs assessment study of rehabilitation services

Individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services:

• Provide orientation to consumers on the process to acquire occupational and assistive equipment.

• Reduce time of provision of services and acquisition of equipment.

• Offer orientation on the services offered in each one of the service areas.

• Offer interpreter services and personal assistance services to deaf consumers and to consumers with the most significant disabilities.

• Greater effort and diversity of strategies to promote integration of family or support system into the rehabilitation process on the part of VRC.

• Improve accessibility of parking for consumers in the physical facilities of regions.

• Offer transportation services to enable the person to get services and go to job.

• Integrate all services within a single facility.

• Uniformity in provision of services and in processes through all regions and service units.

• Extend support services in CAAs and CSEMs. For example, psychologists, occupational therapists, vocational evaluators, job trainers/promoters. • Increase individual counseling services.

• Streamline provision of services in all service units.

• Identify needs of consumers from a holistic perspective.

• Strengthen interagency agreements to promote the quality of life of consumers (ex. Department of Housing, Department of Health and Department of Family).

• Increase significantly resources for the provision of services to the deaf population (TTY, interpreters, others).

• Minimize or reduce continuous changes of VRCs, which delay case management and affect the therapeutic alliance with consumers.

• Greater accessibility of consumer to case management counselor. Consumers sometimes think that counselor assistant is the case manager.

• Clearly delineate the scope and provision of services in CAA and CSEM.

• Improve interagency coordination services among PRVRA units (VRCSCs, CAAs, CSEMs).

• Integrate technology into the services area.

• Encourage service units to have access to databases (internet, CRIS, and other databases).

• Achieve greater consumer and family engagement in the rehabilitation process, particularly in the placement phase.

• Expand the number of case management counselors and decrease caseloads to provide a more agile and responsive service.

Transition:

• Increase participation of transition counselor in the Programming and Placement Committee (PPC).

• Improve orientation processes to student, parent or tutor on the PRVRA services.

• Increase the number of transition counselors in the region.

• Articulate the databases between PRVRA and Department of Education (DE).

• Plan and coordinate for transition students of DE to arrive ready for the VR stage.

• Ensure that services offered by DE are articulated and aligned towards transition.

• Promote and create conditions for transition counselors to determine eligibility to streamline the process.

• Transition plan must include strengthening literacy skills (reading and writing).

• Greater participation of transition counselor in the development of pre–employment skills of transition student.

• Promote greater participation of transition student in the transition process; stimulate empowerment.

Employment:

• Ensure that services and activities that prepare participants for the employment world reach all consumers (cover letter writing, complete job application and resume preparation, among others).

• Determine which staff of CAA or CSEM will develop pre–vocational skills (which include making purchase transactions, money management and use of ATM, among others).

• Case management counselor must establish, in collaboration with consumer, an employment outcome that matches the capabilities of consumer and labor market.

• Establish collaborative agreements with Department of Labor and Human Resources, House of Marketing, Industry and Food Distribution (known in Spanish as MIDA), and Puerto Rican Chamber of Commerce, among others, to increase the bank of employers.

• Offer job search training to consumers.

• Conduct ecological evaluations for those consumers with the most significant disabilities.

• Extend time adjustment in CAAs.

• VRCs should refer cases to CAA and ASEM.

• CRPs should work with the most significant cases and place them in the employment outcomes established in the IPE.

• Strengthen the self–employment area and workshops for the preparation of self–employment proposals.

• Increase the number of job trainers/promoters/analysts of CSEM.

• Expedite the process of salary incentive payments.

• Carry out doping tests as part of placement process.

• Office of Support and Employment Modes (OSEM) should promote legislation to promote the vocational rehabilitation of former inmates.

• Promote visits to industries and real work settings.

• Provide orientation on job offers by industry and geographical area.

• Allow referrals between CAA and CSEM with permission of case management counselor.

• Promote that CAA analysts have a degree in rehabilitation counseling.

• Encourage that CAA and CSEM reports are placed in CRIS.

• Increase the bank of employers available by region.

• Educate and train employer on the rights of individuals with disabilities.

• Decrease time to evaluate and place consumers in employment.

• VRC should refer the job ready case to CSEM.

• Streamline the permits process for small businesses.

Dissemination of Information:

• Provide orientations to educational institutions, employers, consumers and public at large on the mission and provision of services of PRVRA.

• Provide orientations to institutions on the rights of individuals with disabilities and other related topics.

• Promote PRVRA as a job placement agency (access to information online and provide color brochures).

• Promote a widespread dissemination system through mass media.

• Agency must be present at conventions and activities related to the labor market.

• Provide orientation to examining boards to offer reasonable accommodations during the administration of licentiate tests.

Administration:

• Recruit staff in all services provision areas, especially in CAAs and CSEMs.

• Establish more clearly and disseminate the roles and functions of CAAs and CSEMs.

• Integrate technology into administrative processes and provision of services.

• Establish an organizational socialization process to all agency employees so that each employee knows what is done in each area.

• Provide adequate offices to ensure confidentiality. • Promote effective communication between PRVRA areas.

• OSEM should analyze the effectiveness of the provision of services of CRPs considering the recommendations of study.

• Encourage VRCs to refer cases to CAA and CSEM.

• Strengthen CAA and CSEM with provision of human resources, equipment and training in accordance with current State Plan.

• Expedite the process of purchasing equipment.

• Develop an electronic service record where all components of direst services can integrate their observations within the integrated system.

• Promote public policy to develop new models of supported employment.

• Reevaluate procedures manuals of VRCSC, CAA and CSEM.

• Strengthen supervision area to establish quality control of services in each of the structures.

• Take into consideration the input of units, supervisors and directors in the development of public policy and in the development of State Plan.

• Analyze, in collaboration with the Puerto Rico SRC, the performance of CRPs taking into consideration cost and efficiency.

• Require more preparation and experience in the professional staff of CRPs and require the hiring of VRCs in the CRPs.

• Provide greater support to supervisors and directors in their staff evaluation process, and greater support to VRCs upon consumers' complaints.

• Increase the number of VRCs and reduce the caseloads.

Survey for Consumer in Status 20 and 22 on the PRVRA Services

The survey for consumers in Status 20 and 22 was designed to know the opinion of participant who is ready for employment on the physical facilities and satisfaction with services provided by PRVRA. The survey consisted of six (6) areas divided as follows:

1. Area I. Opinion of consumer on the orientation received in PRVRA;

2. Area II. Opinion of consumer on the services of the VRC;

3. Area III. Opinion of consumer on the transition services from school to PRVRA;

4. Area IV. Opinion of consumer on the physical facilities of PRVRA;

5. Area V. Opinion of consumer on the services offered in the CAA and the CSEM of PRVRA; and

6. Area VI. Opinion of consumer regarding treatment received from PRVRA staff.

Results:

• Area I. The scorings suggest that 96.2% of participants felt between very satisfied and satisfied with the orientation received.

• Area II. 94.9% indicated to feel between very satisfied and satisfied with services offered by the VRC.

• Area III. As a group, participants felt between satisfied and very satisfied with the services received from the transition counselor (TC). The two services to be strengthen are: the participation of the TC in some of the meetings of the Programming and Placement Committee (PPC), and the orientation on the transition services of the PRVRA while being in high school. All participants felt between very satisfied and satisfied with all transition services received from the TC.

• Area IV. 95% of participants indicated to feel between very satisfied and satisfied with twelve aspects of the physical facilities surveyed. The aspect with lowest satisfaction was parking in the facilities of the PRVRA for which 23.5% indicated to feel between little satisfied and dissatisfied.

• Area V. As a group, the majority of participants felt between very satisfied and satisfied with all services offered by the staff of the CAAs and CSEMs. The less received services were those where the staff taught to prepare a resume and staff taught to complete a job application.

• Area VI. The average scoring suggests that as a group, the participants felt very satisfied with the care provided by the staff of the PRVRA.

Survey for Consumer in Status 26 on the PRVRA Services

The survey for consumer in Status 26 was designed to know the opinion of the participant who is rehabilitated on the services received from the PRVRA. The satisfaction of the consumer was examined in regard to the professional services received from the VRC, TC, CAA staff, CSEM staff, and CRP staff. Also, open questions were incorporated on service needs and quality of programs. The survey consisted of three (3) areas divided as follows:

• Area I. Opinion of participant regarding treatment received from PRVRA staff;

• Area II. Satisfaction of participant with professional services received from PRVRA staff; and

• Area III. Comments and recommendations.

Results:

• Area I. The responses of participants regarding treatment received from PRVRA staff suggest an opinion between very favorable and favorable for all aspects evaluated.

• Area II. the responses suggest high satisfaction with services received from the VRC, TC, CSEM and CRPs. Of those participants who received services from a CRP, 75% showed satisfaction with the time it took in getting a job, with getting a job in the selected vocational goal and in getting a job within a reasonable distance of their residence. It was observed that of that 28.6% of those who received the service, felt between little satisfied and dissatisfied with the assertion that states that the CRP staff managed to employ them in a place that allows a reasonable amount of working hours per week.

Survey for Potential Unserved Consumers on the VR Service Needs

Please, refer to section VI.VR(j)(1)(C), below.

Survey for the VR Counselor (VRC) on the PRVRA Services

The survey for the VRC was designed to know the opinion of such staff on the physical facilities and services provided by the PRVRA to meet the needs of consumers. The survey was divided in two parts. The first consisted of five (5) questions on demographics. The second part consisted of 68 questions subdivided in three dimensions: adequacy of various aspects (28), physical facilities of the PRVRA (12) and services provided by CSEM or CAA (28). The survey consisted of three (3) dimensions divided as follows:

1. Dimension I. Opinion of VRC on adequacy of various aspects related to needs of consumer in PRVRA;

2. Dimension II. Opinion of VRC on physical facilities of PRVRA; and

3. Dimension III. Opinion of VRC on adequacy of services offered in CSEM and CAA of PRVRA.

Results:

• Dimension I. Five aspects were observed in which over 90% of participants indicated that they fully agree or agree that they are adequate to meet the needs of participants. The following are such

aspects: the stipulated time to determine eligibility (94.1%); the information contained in the physical service record (97%); the services provided by the PRVRA (94.1%); the documents required to determine eligibility (94%); and the number of educational institutions for training of consumers (91.2%). Among the items to which over 50% of participants indicated to strongly disagree or disagree that aspects are suitable to meet the needs of participants are the following: the amount of employers for the placement of consumers (72.7%); education or knowledge of employer on the rights of individuals with disabilities (58.11%); and availability of salary incentives that (51.7%).

• Dimension II. When analyzing, on a global basis, the responses of participants, it shows that the majority of these obtained average scorings suggesting a general opinion in agreeing that the physical facilities meet the needs of consumers.

• Dimension III. The following are among the services of the CAA and CSEM with responses from the VRCs suggesting inadequacy: the average time taken to place the consumer (68.8%); the time taken in the evaluation process in the CAA (72.8%); the visits to industries and real work settings (54.6%); and the orientations on job offers from different employers and industries by geographical areas.

Qualitative Phase (Focal Groups and Interviews)

To constitute the qualitative phase, the GSRC of the UPR programmed the celebration of five focal groups and a structured interview sent to the CRPs.

Regional Directors Focal Group

The guiding questions used to conduct the Regional Directors Focal Group were directed to identify those internal aspects which limit the provision of services, the needs of consumers in their VR process, the needs of CRPs, and to identify those needs of individuals with disabilities that are part of potential consumers who have not been served. Through the arguments of each question, a discussion was generated which included recommendations for the improvement of services. In addition, the free theme concept was incorporated.

Results:

The internal aspects identified by regional directors that could limit the provision of services to consumers, could be subdivided in three groups: the ones related to administrative aspects and protocol; the ones related to staff supervision, particularly to VRC; and others. In respect to external services, the approaches revolved mainly on the difficulties of collaboration with the Department of Labor itself and with other government agencies such as the Office of the Advocate of the Persons with Disabilities (OAPD). In the impression of the majority of the members of the group, the service from the CRPs was described as very expensive for the PRVRA and they justified the opinion noting that the PRVRA could do a better job at a lower cost if having the resources within the agency. In terms of groups that might be considered as unserved or underserved, the following were mentioned: the deaf–blind, the confined population, the profoundly deaf, the mentally retarded and the homeless. The following were mentioned among the factors associated with the low rate of participation of these groups: poor orientation offered by the PRDE and PRDOF on the services of the PRVRA and other government agencies; overprotection of parents and tutors; and lack of resources of participants to reach the PRVRA facilities and request services (transportation).

CAA Focal Group

The CAA Focal Group was constituted by active employees of the PRVRA. The primary objective of this group was to know how a group of employees of CAA describes and relates the CAA as a programmatic structure that contributes to the mission of the PRVRA. In this context, internal/external challenges and alternatives were identified to optimize services of CAA.

Results:

The staff wants to see that the goals stated in the plan are carried out, particularly including strengthening CAAs to provide services, hire staff and obtain resources. The staff also expects processes to be re–evaluated in accordance to historic moment and profile of clientele that is attended as those specified in the manual that do not respond to current reality. The staff emphasized that public policy is met and that they are integrated into all processes of CAA since the responsibilities are shared with the VRCs.

CSEM Focal Group

The CSEM Focal Group was constituted by active employees of the PRVRA. The primary objective of this group was to know how a group of employees of the CSEM describes and relates the CSEM as a useful programmatic structure that contributes to the mission of the PRVRA. In this context, internal/external challenges and alternatives were identified to optimize services of CSEM.

Results:

When exploring on internal challenges, participants expressed that at the present there are substructures of CSEM lacking human capital. There is delay in the evaluation services in CAAs and need for articulation of centers (VRCSCs, CAAs and CSEMs). Participants indicated that if given the necessary staff to the CSEM structure, they could provide more services and the PRVRA would not have to contract CRPs, since they along with the entire team could carry out functions at less cost for the agency. External challenges: transportation problems of consumers and lack of support to reach the employment; unemployment and competitiveness of those who are looking for employment. Some indicated that communication and collaboration with the PRDOLHR must be improved.

Directors of Counseling Services (DCS) Focal Group

The DCS Focal Group was constituted by VRCs who direct counseling services through several regions of the PRVRA. The primary objective of this group was to know how supervisors describe and recognize the counseling services as a programmatic unit that meets the VR needs of consumers. Similarly, the questions were aimed at identifying factors that limit the provision of services, establish the needs of consumers in accordance to the PRVRA mission and generate possible recommendations for improving the quality of services.

Results:

Participants understand that personnel is needed, both VRCs and support team of assistants and secretarial staff, and that personnel must have the sensitivity needed to work with the population that the agency serves. Other challenges would be high caseloads and interpretation of processes differently in each region. Regarding the CRPs, they expressed an opinion in that they are working the less severe cases, there is lack of follow–up after placement, and use of the same types of employment, among other aspects. As to other situations in which they consider limit the

achievement of the mission of agency are lack of collaboration among agencies such as the DLHR and Consortiums, where information is not shared, especially information about job offers; and impact on the budget of sponsored studies in the United States to consumers.

Vocationally Rehabilitated Consumers Focal Group

The Vocationally Rehabilitated Consumers Focal Group was designed to compensate for the low participation of consumers in Status 26 who responded to the survey. The guiding questions of this focal group were directed to lift evidence on the appropriateness of services received, describe the treatment received from professional PRVRA staff and identify internal processes that may have hindered their vocational rehabilitation. Also, a section on free themes was incorporated.

Findings:

• Great satisfaction with services received from PRVRA. Although it was felt that PRVRA services were adequate, two points were made that affect the adequacy of services within the PRVRA. The first point is related to the time to receive the service was longer than expected. The second point is directed to the difficulties caused by unexpected changes in the VRC as case manager of consumer.

• They generally understood that the treatment received from PRVRA professionals was adequate and that it was accompanied by great sensitivity and commitment to the consumer. Much of the group felt that they were extensively oriented by PRVRA staff on various aspects, among these, their rights within the agency.

• The group pointed out four internal factors that may have affected the provision of VR services: confusion of roles that might exist between the case management counselor and his assistant; current structure of the equipment acquisition process; supervision of supported employment services offered through a CRP; suppliers of educational institutions are not focused on the goal of PRVRA and on the processes that must be established among PRVRA, consumer and such educational institution. Finally, the opinion of the group was explored regarding what could have happened to those cases who failed to achieve vocational rehabilitation in the same way that was reached by them. The group expressed various reasons related directly to high caseloads, complexity of the condition of consumer, follow–up and commitment that has both the case management counselor and support staff and lack of orientation and support from family members in processes of PRVRA.

• Two indications were made that must be addressed by PRVRA in order to improve the provision of services: lack of interpreters for the deaf within PRVRA and the importance of PRVRA to work intensely to increase its visibility and intervention in the mass media communication of the Island such that disabled people who have any need for services may know of the existence and availability of PRVRA to impact such population.

• The group recommended as necessary to provide orientation and sensitize employers so that they can recognize the capabilities of a person with disabilities within the work setting, and that his presence is not seen as a means to obtain additional revenue for the business.

Literature Review on the Experience of Employers with PRVRA Consumers

The focal group with employers could not be carried out due to several drawbacks related to achieving dates and times (schedules) in which a suitable group of employers coincide and attend to

the focal group. In order to generate information on themes proposed for discussion with employers, professional and relevant local literature was reviewed. The most recent research regarding experience of employers employing people with disabilities from the PRVRA and CRP is the thesis by Hernández y Rivera (2010), titled Factors Influencing Job Retention of Individuals with Disabilities from the Perspective of a Group of Private Sector Employers: A Focal Group. In accordance with such research, the factors that limit the job retention of individuals with disabilities referred by the PRVRA were:

• Negative attitude of consumer towards employer

• Economic recession

• Reduction of staff

• Little interaction and communication between PRVRA and employer

• Few referrals from PRVRA to employer

• Ignorance of potential and capacity of consumer on the part of the employer

• Protocols and collective agreements that limit even more the selection, employability and job retention of disabled individuals

• Reasonable accommodations that are expensive

• Emotional conditions

Also, employers participating in the research recommended to establish better communication and working relationships with the PRVRA in order to obtain more employees with disabilities, know about post–employment services and about labor laws that cover employees with disabilities.

Another relevant research aimed at listening to the feelings of employers regarding employability of disabled individuals was the one carried out by Caballero, González & Nieves (2010). This research was also a thesis titled Disposition of a Group of Employers to Recruit People with a Diagnosis of Mental Disorder. The results showed little knowledge and willingness of employers to recruit people with mental disorders. The correlation analysis indicates that no significant relationship was found between knowledge of employer and his disposition to recruit individuals with a diagnosis of mental disorder.

Structured Interview to CRPs

Please, refer to section VI.VR(j)(2), below.

Additional Information on Needs of Pre–Employment Transition Services

The sample of customers surveyed and the focus group included persons with the most significant disabilities. In addition, the structured interview for managers of PRCs identified needs in relation to this group.

B. WHO ARE MINORITIES;

In Puerto Rico, 99.03% of the population is of Hispanic or Latin origin. Therefore, the PRVRA considers there is no need to implement a procedure to identify persons with disabilities who are minorities.

C. WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM;

The survey for potential consumers unserved was designed to know the VR service needs sectors that are underserved or that are not receiving any service for reasons of accessibility and/or social marginalization. The purpose of the survey was to gather information on the need and interest of these individuals to receive VR services. The sample was constituted by 69 individuals coming from centers or programs that offer services to people with the following characteristics: the homeless, individuals with intellectual disabilities or mental retardation, women victims of domestic violence and individuals with drug abuse or dependence among which many have been confined.

The survey was constituted by three (3) areas divided as follows:

1. Area I. Participant data;

2. Area II. Need of VR services; and

3. Area III. Comments and recommendations.

Results:

An 87% of participants indicated receiving services from an organization or CRP and 84% indicated being diagnosed with any disability or condition. However, with respect to this last fact, the researchers believe that 100% must have a significant disability. A 58.2% indicated having heard about the PRVRA services. A 79.1% indicated not having received services from the PRVRA and 94% indicated being interested in getting a job with pay. Finally, the majority of participants (80.3%) indicated not knowing the PRVRA eligibility criteria. The responses of participants as to how necessary would be to receive the 14 services included in the survey, suggest that all services are between very necessary and necessary. Among these, we could emphasize on getting a gainful employment, developing skills that will maintain an employment, knowing community services that will allow to achieve an employment and receiving professional support to help exceed as a person, as the assertions with greater endorsement as much needed services.

The above suggests the suitability to continue conducting dissemination and outreach activities in the community to serve individuals and groups who may be eligible. Unserved populations were not identified.

D. WHO HAVE BEEN SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

Information about the profile and needs of individuals served by other components of the workforce development system were collected from different sources, such as: program representatives, One Stop Centers staff, VRA staff who receive referrals from those centers, and also VRA staff who are representatives in workforce boards. The Director of PRVRA Office of Support and Employment

Modes (OSEM) is a member of the Workforce Development Board of Bayamón and identified the following profile and needs: low education levels, lack of work skills, low economic resources, drop out from schools, single parents, among others. Similar needs were identified by the Adult Education Program representative: low school levels, single parents, lack of work skills, unemployed, most were participants of special education program, English language deficiency, among others. Representative from a One Stop Center also mentioned that some of the participants with disabilities referred to PRVRA by the One Stop Center needs selective placement or special placement efforts. Two VRA Analysts who visit One Stop Centers mentioned that some individuals with disabilities referred to VRA had lost their jobs because of their disability and requested training, others need to complete high school and also request trainings, and some individuals need social supports, medical treatment specially for mental disabilities, and need intensive intervention to be ready for employment. PRVRA staff who visit One Stop Centers coordinate referrals to VR Counselors of those individuals served through other components of the workforce system.

The need to reinforce communication and collaboration between the core-programs, and specially the Department of Labor, in order to promote employment outcomes was a finding from the CSNA focal groups with VR Staff. Through recent meetings for WIOA implementation we expect to improve that communication.

E. WHO ARE YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING, AS APPROPRIATE, THEIR NEED FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES OR OTHER TRANSITION SERVICES.

Please, refer to sections j.1. and j.3., for a summary of findings for the transition services.

2. IDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE; AND

A Structured Interview was designed to be answer by the managers of CRPs. The guiding questions to conduct the structured interview were originally designed by the PRVRA and the PRSRC, reviewed by GSRC and finally approved by the PRVRA. In total, the interview contains 35 questions. The last question was aimed at receiving their comments and recommendations to improve the job placement and employment services to individuals with disabilities.

Findings:

• With relation to limitations faced to provide employment services to the population served, CRPs identified the following: economic area; transportation; few employment opportunities on the Island; geographical area; few alternatives in rural towns; several organizations that offer the same service and compete in the labor market; and employers who require employees to cover several positions. It would help to have a little more prompt referrals from the PRVRA (also presented as a recommendation).

• With relation to limitations faced to market PRVRA consumers in quality jobs, CRPs identified the following: salary incentives (2/5 maintained this view); little academic preparation of most consumers and positions require certifications, high school diploma, etc. (3/5 maintained this view); prejudice of employers; performance problems in the area of resources of enterprises and ignorance of employers about their social responsibility; little flexibility offered by family of consumer to move from geographical area (while having the resources to be transported) and inflexibility of schedules; and

having to compete with other organizations due to the fact that some employers offer opportunities to only one organization.

• With relation to limitations faced to achieve stabilization of consumer in the work setting, CRPs identified the following: ineffective public transportation; lack of family support; codependency on parents; family overprotection; intensive promotion by different means; lack of labor maturity; and that employers reduce working hours in accordance with economic situation.

• In terms of types of alliances recommended for the provision of extended services, CRPs indicated the following: proposal to provide only the extended support services; alliances with universities so that as practicum or internship, students can provide extended support and other services that may be necessary; collaborative agreements with enterprises where services exchange arises, and with agencies in the community and municipalities; and identification of qualified personnel or family members of consumer to whom some type of economic support can be offered to serve as extended support.

• CRPs identified the following lacking competencies of consumers referred for job placement and employment services: non realistic employment goals; lag in academic area; not having academic requirements, skills, knowledge and abilities needed to hold a position; labor maturity; money management; communication and projection.

• CRPs consider that consumers are not prepared to transfer learned skills and apply them to new labor trends, due to lack of independent living/social/communication/ labor and academic skills, in addition to little work experience. Also, new labor trends of labor market require that employees are willing to work in different positions and different work schedules according to need.

Recommendations to improve job placement and employment services to individuals with disabilities:

• Areas to improve:

• Human Resources presentations • Salary incentives (very important) • Bring success stories • Day of achievements to recognize consumers and employers • Employment, education and health fairs • Dissemination activities • Promote consumers as highly qualified candidates • Orientation and training to employers • Training to employees • Sensitize employers • Benefits received by employer for contracting person with disabilities • Design proposals to prepare consumers before employment (pre–employment).

• It would be good to have a massive sensitization and education campaign aimed at community and employers, highlighting the potential and benefits of having individuals with disabilities in the enterprise. In addition, establish salary incentive programs in order to compete with other agencies offering such programs.

• Offer training in accordance to real needs of labor market and more effective strategies to achieve job placements. We recommend better evaluations of consumers to be job ready at the moment of referral and placement.

• Referred consumers should be better prepared and have required employability skills, among others.

3. INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES FOR TRANSITION CAREER SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH SERVICES ARE COORDINATED WITH TRANSITION SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT .

In September of 2015, an “Interagency Meeting on Transition Processes” was held in which staff of the Department of Education and staff of the PRVRA participated. During such meeting, a survey was administered that was answered by 89 people in which they were asked to identify, in order of priority, the pre–employment services that they considered necessary for youth with disabilities on the Island. The findings were as follows:

• The staff of the Department of Education, Special Education Program, identified needs in the following order of priority:

1. Counseling for transition or postsecondary studies 2. Learning experiences based on employment 3. Career/employment exploration counseling 4. Adjustment in social skills and in independent living skills 5. Instruction in self–advocacy

• The staff of the PRVRA identified needs in the following order of priority:

1. Counseling for transition or postsecondary studies and learning experiences based on employment (equal priority) 2. Career/employment exploration counseling 3. Adjustment in social skills and in independent living skills 4. Instruction in self–advocacy

Both groups agreed that all needs are important within the process to provide to the disabled students with the necessary tools to acquire and retain an employment. The surveyed group of the PRVRA employees also mentioned the need for more staff in the transition area to strengthen it.

The GSRC of the UPR, which also had representation in the aforementioned Interagency Meeting, has several research works related to youth and students with disabilities. These can be used as reference to identify PETS needs, and among them, stand the following findings:

• Rivera and Vargas Thesis (Dec. 2014): Conceptual Model for the Provision of Counseling in–School Rehabilitation Services for Students with Disabilities participants of the PRDE Special Education Program. Based on this research, the PRVRA understood need to emphasize on the provision of Pre–Employment Transition Services for Career Counseling, Transition Counseling or post–secondary studies, Setting Social and independent living Skills, and employment based learning experiences.

• Thesis of Rivera and Vargas (December 2014) titled: Conceptual Model for the Provision of School Rehabilitation Counseling Services to Student with Disabilities Participants of the Department of Education of Puerto Rico, Assigned to the Special Education Program. Based on the information obtained from this research work, the PRVRA understands the need to emphasize on the provision Pre–Employment Transition Services of career counseling, counseling for transition or postsecondary studies, adjustment in social skills and in independent living skills, and learning experiences based on employment.

• Thesis of Albarrán, Rodríguez and Toledo (2014) titled: Development of Social Skills in a Group of School Dropouts. Based on the information obtained from this research study, the PRVRA understands the need to emphasize on the provision of Pre–Employment Transition Services of adjustment in social skills and in independent living skills, and learning experiences based on employment in the early stages of the transition process. To do so while the young people are still in school can serve as a strategy to prevent school dropout while maximizing strengths directed towards the labor market.

• Thesis of Carmen Y. Pérez (2012) titled: Rehabilitation Counseling in the School Setting? The Opinion of a Sample of Parents of Students with Disabilities Who Receive Special Education Services in the Department of Education, Arecibo Region. Based on the information obtained from this research study, the PRVRA clearly understands the need for providing or continue to provide the full range of Pre–Employment Transition Services, especially career counseling, counseling for transition or postsecondary studies, and instruction in self–advocacy.

• Thesis of Camacho and Torres (May 2011) titled: Opinion of a Sample of Consumers of the PRVRA on the Role of the VR Counselors as Facilitators in the Development of their Empowerment in the Vocational Selection Process. Based on the information obtained from this research study, the PRVRA understands the need to emphasize on the provision of the career counseling service focused on the search for information on the vocational goal and how appropriate is based on the analysis of strengths and disability.

As explained in Section VI.VR(d), above; in Puerto Rico, Act51–1996, as amended, provides for the coordination between the Assistant Secretariat of Comprehensive Educational Services for Persons with Disabilities of the PRDE and the PRVRA. The purpose of such coordination is to ensure the transition of youth with disabilities from the PRDE to the PRVRA. Between both agencies there are established procedures to ensure that the IPE is drafted before the student leaves school and receives the pre–employment transition services necessary.

Currently, the PRVRA has been conducting Pre–Employment Transition Services activities in which school staff and students are invited to our facilities. During such activities, the young people receive guidance and Pre–Employment Transition Services.

From the Survey for Consumer in Status 20 and 22 on the PRVRA Services it can be deduced that, as a group, the participants felt between satisfied and very satisfied with the services received from the transition counselor (TC). The two services to be strengthened were the participation of the TC in some of the meetings of the Programming and Placement Committee (PPC), and the orientation on the transition services of the PRVRA while in high school. All participants felt between very satisfied and satisfied with all transition services received from the TC.

K. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.11(b)). Describe:

1. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES;

The PRVRA has estimated the provision of VR services (consumers with implemented service plans) to 46,922 persons with disabilities, during FY2017. The purpose is to assist them in achieving an employment outcome and a more independent living.

Although the agency is not under an Order of Selection, WIOA emphasizes the provision of services to the population with the most significant disabilities. The following is a breakdown by priority category and estimate of consumers to be served:

BREAKDOWN BY PRIORITY CATEGORY AND ESTIMATE OF CONSUMERS TO BE SERVED

Priority category|Funds ($)|Title|Consumers to be served|Average cost of services

I. Most significant disabilities|25,378,775|I|22,498|1,128.05

|300,000|VI–B|25|12,000.00

II. Significant disabilities|17,976,633|I|15,953|1,126.85

III. Non–significant disabilities|9,517,041|I|8,446|1,126.81

Source. PRVRA.

The following section provides a description of the service areas and the breakdown of projected costs for FY 2017:

SERVICE AREAS AND THE BREAKDOWN OF PROJECTED COSTS, FY 2017

Service area|Funds ($)

|Title I or VI–B|Estimated customers|Average cost of services ($)

Evaluation (Contracted services)|0|I|0|0.00

Physical and mental rehabilitation|687,052|I|18,149|37.86

Training|16,938,924|I|33,163|510.78

Cash allowance|6,434,549|I|127,295|50.55

Transportation|6,395,371|I|99,044|64.57

Personal assistance (personal aides)|728,411|I|1,377|528.98

Technological assistance|1,144,533|I|957|1,195.96

Post–employment|$0.00|I|4|0.00

Small businesses, other|1,070,755|I|492|2,176.33

Supported employment services|2,533,928|I|1,058|2,395.02

Community Rehabilitation Programs contracting|300,000|VI–B||

Total|36,233,523|I/VI–B|281,539**|128.70

* Amounts are based on figures approved in the current budget for FY 2015 and RSA–2 Federal Report.

** Consumers who receive duplicate variety of services depending on the nature of it. (Ex. A consumer may also include training support services, transportation, personal care, etc., and also be getting assistive technology services among others. Therefore, the estimated number of consumers to be served without duplicating is 46.299.

2. THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL RECEIVE SERVICES UNDER:

A. THE VR PROGRAM;

Please, refer to previous section.

B. THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM; AND

Please, refer to section k.1.A.

C. EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION;

Not applicable.

3. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES, BUT ARE NOT RECEIVING SUCH SERVICES DUE TO AN ORDER OF SELECTION; AND

Not applicable.

4. THE COST OF SERVICES FOR THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS ESTIMATED TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES. IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION, IDENTIFY THE COST OF SERVICES FOR EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY.

Please, refer to section k.1.A. above. Order of selection not applicable.

L. STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

The designated State unit must:

1. IDENTIFY IF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES WERE JOINTLY DEVELOPED

Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the State VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the State has a Council, and jointly agreed to any revisions.

Please, refer to sections I.2., below.

2. IDENTIFY THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IN CARRYING OUT THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS.

The PRVRA, in partnership and collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), has identified the following goals and priorities needed to carry out the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.

Goal 1 Strengthen the services provision process of applicants/consumers of the PRVRA; emphasizing on compliance with performance indicators and productivity measures established by the federal government and the public policy of the agency.

Priorities:

1. Continue to provide technical assistance to counseling services staff for the compliance and data collection of the new performance indicators established by WIOA.

2. Collaborate with the “core–programs” in order to develop: integrated processes for the service delivery; and forms and processes for collection of common data elements to identify individuals served by more than one “core–program”.

Goal 2

Ensure the provision of services to eligible youth with disabilities, and pre–employment transition services to students with disabilities coming from transition, so that they are able to achieve an employment outcome.

Priorities:

1. Maintain the level of participation of school staff, parents and students on orientations related to which are the pre–employment skills for developing careers paths (career pathways).

2. Collaborate with the core programs to develop soft skills for transition–age students.

Goal 3 Strengthen the relationship with employers to identify integrated competitive employment opportunities and career exploration.

Priorities:

1. Expand the employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Goal 4

Continue with the process of dissemination of the PRVRA services in accordance with the eligibility criteria and provision of rehabilitation services to the persons with disabilities.

Priorities:

1. Disseminate the impact on changes in legislation and how the integration of core programs under WIOA can help individuals to achieve an employment outcome.

Goal 5

Strengthen the administrative, fiscal and programmatic procedures to comply with the regulations established and the institutional efficiency required.

Priorities:

1. Continue with the analysis of the operational performance and needs for its improvement.

These goals and priorities were developed taking into account the findings from the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs and the Amendments set forth in WIOA, among others.

3. ENSURE THAT THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES ARE BASED ON AN ANALYSIS OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

Please, refer to sections j and l.2. above.

A. THE MOST RECENT COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT, INCLUDING ANY UPDATES;

Please refer to sections j. and l. 2., above.

B. THE STATE'S PERFORMANCE UNDER THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES OF SECTION 116 OF WIOA; AND

Please refer to sections l. 2. Goal 1, above.

C. OTHER AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON THE OPERATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE VR PROGRAM, INCLUDING ANY REPORTS RECEIVED FROM THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL AND FINDING AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MONITORING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED UNDER SECTION 107.

Goals and priorities were developed in collaboration with the SRC. The SRC also collaborated with PRVRA in the Statewide Needs Assessment, which included consumers' surveys on satisfaction with the Agency's services and also provided information on areas to improve operation and

effectiveness. The PRVRA also participates in the SRC's meetings where input is received directly and was considered to develop goals and priorities.

M. ORDER OF SELECTION

Describe:

1. WHETHER THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL IMPLEMENT AND ORDER OF SELECTION. IF SO, DESCRIBE:

A. THE ORDER TO BE FOLLOWED IN SELECTING ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO BE PROVIDED VR SERVICES.

Not applicable.

B. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER.

Not applicable.

C. THE SERVICE AND OUTCOME GOALS.

Not applicable.

D. THE TIME WITHIN WHICH THESE GOALS MAY BE ACHIEVED FOR INDIVIDUALS IN EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY WITHIN THE ORDER.

Not applicable.

E. HOW INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES ARE SELECTED FOR SERVICES BEFORE ALL OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES; AND

Not applicable.

2. IF THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT HAS ELECTED TO SERVE ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS, REGARDLESS OF ANY ESTABLISHED ORDER OF SELECTION, WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT.

Not applicable.

N. GOALS AND PLANS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS.

1. SPECIFY THE STATE'S GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR FUNDS RECEIVED UNDER SECTION 603 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.

The PRVRA has developed the following goals and plans for the distribution of Title VI, Part B funds:

Goal A

Serve at least 200 new consumers in the supported employment modality.

Goal B

Maintain a level of satisfaction of 85% of those consumers who received supported employment services at the closure of the case.

Plans:

• Use other sources of funding, in addition to the ones from Title VI, Part B, needed to expand the provision of supported employment services.

• Contract and support community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) throughout the Island so that at least 136 consumers, who received supported employment services, are able to achieve an employment outcome.

• Strengthen the provision of supported employment services through training and technical assistance to the staff of the CRPs. The Office of Support and Employment Modes (OSEM) and the centers of support and employment modes (CSEMs) will provide such technical assistance in aspects such as:

• Orientation on the guides to submit proposals • Other aspects related to the provision of supported employment services

• Continue administering satisfaction surveys of the consumer in terms of the services received in the CRPs and in the CSEMs, in order to identify areas to be strengthened or improved.

• Continue conducting monitoring interventions to the CRPs in order to validate compliance with the provision of services established in the contracts.

• Explore in the community, in agencies, in the state legislature and in social interest groups; the availability of gathering funds to the PRVRA for the provision of supported employment services.

Distribution of Title VI, Part B funds:

The estimated total of projected funds for the provision of supported employment services for is $4,143,088 distributed as follows: $300,000 from Title VI–B for the contacting of a CRP; and $3,843,088 from Title I for the contracting of other CRPs and for expenses related to the supported employment services.

2. DESCRIBE THE ACTIVITIES TO BE CONDUCTED, WITH FUNDS RESERVED PURSUANT TO SECTION 603(D), FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING:

A. THE PROVISION OF EXTENDED SERVICES FOR A PERIOD NOT TO EXCEED 4 YEARS; AND

The PRVRA will make available resources for extended support services for a period not exceeding 4 years. These services will be provided through CRPs. CSEM Analysts will receive the request for extended support services from employers and will negotiate with the CRP the service to be provided and the number of interventions needed to stabilize individual in employment. An authorization for services document will be created on the case management system.

B. HOW THE STATE WILL LEVERAGE OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDS TO INCREASE RESOURCES FOR EXTENDED SERVICES AND EXPANDED SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES.

The PRVRA will explore in the community, and other avenues, to determine the availability of funds for the provision of supported employment for youth with the most significant disabilities. As part of those efforts the Agency will explore grants opportunities and also will approach the State Council on Developmental Disabilities staff, before the end of 2016, to retake a previous collaborative agreement for the optimization of interagency resources, develop a community support network in favor of individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth, employment activities to promote inclusion of these population into integrated work settings, activities or projects to provide extended supports services, among others.

O. STATE'S STRATEGIES

Describe the required strategies and how the agency will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the VR and the Supported Employment programs (See sections 101(a)(15)(D) and (18)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act and section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)):

1. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

The PRVRA has identified several strategies needed to achieve the goals and priorities established in Section (I), above.

Goal 1 Strengthen the services provision process of applicants/consumers of the PRVRA; emphasizing on compliance with performance indicators and productivity measures established by the federal government and the public policy of the agency.

Strategies:

• Strengthen the coordination with the PRDOLHR to know employment trends and types of employers.

• Continue implementing employment projects through the development of self–employments.

• Continue with the programmatic monitoring interventions and technical assistance to the CRPs, to ensure quality and agility in the services to the consumers with the most significant disabilities.

• Continue the participation of the PRVRA consumers in employment–related activities available in the One–Stop Centers and other components of WIOA.

• Continue referring consumers, who are beneficiaries of the Social Security Disability Insurance, to the Caribbean Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (CWIPA) Program for the counseling service for benefits planning.

• Share with the PRSRC the Normative Communications governing the provision of services.

• Continue with the programmatic monitoring interventions of the services provision process to ensure compliance with the public policy.

• Continue offering technical assistance to the supervisory staff of counseling services to improve decision–making in case management.

• Refer the PRVRA consumers to the services of other components of WIOA (Title I, Title II, Employment Service and other programs) to expand their job skills.

Goal 2

Ensure the provision of services to eligible youth with disabilities, and pre–employment transition services to students with disabilities coming from transition, so that they are able to achieve an employment outcome.

Strategies:

• Continue with the monthly monitoring of eligibility determinations within 60 days, and planning and signature of IPE within 90 days, of the transition–age youth referred to the PRVRA.

• Increase the participation of the VR counselor in the meetings of the Programming and Placement Committee (PPC) on transition–age youth.

• Offer pre–employment activities in schools.

• Continue with the identification of transition–age consumers referred and served in the centers of assessment and adjustment (CAAs).

• Continue with the identification of transition–age consumers referred and served in the centers of support and employment modes (CSEMs) and the results of these youth in the different modes of employment.

• Strengthen relationships between the PRDE and the PRVRA to facilitate the identification of students who can benefit from the transition services.

• Continue providing orientation to the school staff on the services of the PRVRA.

Goal 3

Strengthen the relationship with employers to identify integrated competitive employment opportunities and career exploration.

Strategies:

• Provide training activities and/or technical assistance to employers on the following: ADA requirements, learning opportunities based on employment, recruitment of qualified people with disabilities, and reasonable accommodations in employment, among others.

• Continue with the granting of salary incentives to employers to promote employment opportunities for consumers.

• Continue with the participation in the meetings of the State Board of WIOA.

• Maintain active participation of the PRVRA staff in activities that bring together employers.

• Refer to the programs under the Wagner–Peyser Act, those PRVRA consumers who have the skills and credentials to be marketed with employers.

Goal 4

Continue with the dissemination of the PRVRA services in accordance with the eligibility criteria and provision of rehabilitation services to people with disabilities.

Strategies:

• Continue with the dissemination on the revision of the State Plan to be presented, in order to ensure the participation of applicants/consumers, public at large and agency staff.

• Continue with the participation in dissemination activities in the community by the PRVRA and/or in coordination with the PRSRC, and other “core–programs”.

• Continue with the dissemination of services of the PRVRA in the One–Stop Centers.

• Continue with the dissemination of services on radio and television, as requested by such media.

Goal 5

Strengthen the administrative, fiscal and programmatic procedures to comply with the regulations established and the institutional efficiency required.

Strategies:

• Offer training to the staff to strengthen knowledge and skills needed in the performance of their duties.

• Continue carrying out periodic performance evaluations of the agency staff to ensure institutional efficiency.

• Maintain the financial support level of the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) and the State Rehabilitation Council (PRSRC), in order to assist and support their operations and in coordination with the PRVRA, develop employment opportunities and independent living for our applicants/consumers.

• Update administrative, fiscal and programmatic procedures in accordance with established state and federal regulations, and the economic and social situation of the country, as needed.

• Continue to support all areas of the agency in the use of available information (computer) systems, and develop applications to streamline processes, reports and procedures according to the needs presented by areas that, at the same time, are consulted with service/administrative staff.

• Carry out participation meetings with the agency staff on aspects related to public policy.

• Conduct monitoring interventions to ensure compliance with procedures.

2. HOW A BROAD RANGE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES AND DEVICES WILL BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AT EACH STAGE OF THE REHABILITATION PROCESS AND ON A STATEWIDE BASIS.

The PRVRA has the purpose of providing assistive technology services to eligible applicants/consumers who require such services. For this purpose, the PRVRA has the following:

• Procedures, regulations and manuals for the provision of assistive technology services

• VR counselors who refer applicants/consumers to the CAAs for: needs assessment of assistive technology, recommendation and prescription of equipment, delivery and training on the use of equipment, and technical assistance

• Main Unit of Assistive Technology (head office) in the CAA of the San Juan region

• Areas of assistive technology in the CAAs of Arecibo, Ponce, Toa Baja, Caguas and San Germán

• Assistive technology equipment that meets the following needs:

• Access to a computer; • Communication; • Alternate support for cognitive deficit; • Independent living; • Environmental controls; and • Visual.

• Audiological Clinics in the Arecibo, Caguas and San Juan regions with upgraded equipment of assistive technology for independent living and to facilitate communication with the deaf/partially deaf consumers

• Specialized and certified professionals in assistive technology who provide this type of services

• Opportunities for professional development to keep up to date knowledge of the human resources who provide assistive technology services.

In addition, the PRVRA has established a collaborative agreement with the PRATP to offer training to agency staff on new technologies and equipment. The PRVRA may refer consumers for assistive technology services not available in the agency.

3. THE OUTREACH PROCEDURES THAT WILL BE USED TO IDENTIFY AND SERVE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES, INCLUDING THOSE WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, AS WELL AS THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM.

In terms of the outreach procedures to identify and serve people with disabilities who are minority, such procedures do not apply to Puerto Rico. The Island is considered a Hispanic or Latino country, with a population of 3,651,545 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census Estimate for 2013. Out of this total, 99.03% is of Hispanic or Latino origin. Therefore, the PRVRA considers that there is no need to implement any type of procedure to identify persons with disabilities who are minority.

The PRVRA has community liaison units, attached to the centers of VR counseling services (CVRCS), operating in the six (6) regions of the agency. These units have a staff that maintains contact with various referral sources such as: schools, hospitals, institutions specialized in the

provision of services to the population with disabilities, and public/private agencies. Such staff participates in activities (orientations on VR services, job fairs, among others) for the purpose of expanding the dissemination of information on services and increasing the inclusion of persons with the most significant disabilities.

The agency also remains active and participates in bills that are developed in the state legislature which are related to people with disabilities.

4. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND VR SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE COORDINATION OF SERVICES DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF SUCH STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY LIFE (INCLUDING THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES).

Please, see strategies under Goal section o.

5. IF APPLICABLE, PLANS FOR ESTABLISHING, DEVELOPING, OR IMPROVING COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE.

The PRVRA issues a public notice annually for the contracting of CRPs that provide services to the consumers with the most significant disabilities. It currently has contractual agreements with CRPs throughout the Island. It also provides orientations, technical assistance and monitoring activities in all stages of the provision of services and during the contractual period between the PRVRA and each CRP. Technical assistance will be provided to all CRPs that have identified areas with some kind of need of improvement during any stage of the monitoring process.

6. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE STATE WITH RESPECT TO THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA.

The VRA continues implementing the following strategies to improve state performance with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators:

a. Continue with the practice of sharing periodically statistical information with regional staff.

b. Articulate intervention plans with regional directors, directors of CVRCS, directors of CAAs, directors of CSEMs, and director of the Office of Programmatic Quality Control and Regional Support in order to comply with the established goals. Priority attention will be given to those regions that have confronted greater difficulty in the compliance of goals and indicators. Regions will develop a work plan based on an analysis of each work zone, the employment situation in the geographical area, and the projections of cases to be served.

c. The case management system has being modified to register follow up after exit of program participants. The follow up screen includes fields for each WIOA section 116 indicators. A report was also developed by the programmers to facilitate VR staff to have a list of program participants after exit and the dates for follow up corresponding to the second and fourth quarters after exit. Instructions will be provided to regional staff about the importance to perform follow up and capture indicators data.

d. Particular emphasis will be given to the importance of services to employers, including training or orientations to improve awareness about the benefits to recruit and retain people with disabilities, and also technical assistance after placement.

e. The PRVRA will contact Department of Labor staff to explore the possibility to receive Unemployment Insurance records to validate WIOA's first and second performance indicators information.

f. The Agency will also refer consumers to other core programs and continue to promote post-secondary education among consumers. Most of PRVRA consumers are receiving training.

7. STRATEGIES FOR ASSISTING OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

The PRVRA has developed the following strategies to assist other WIOA components in the provision of assistance to people with disabilities:

a. Coordinate the participation of the PRVRA staff in the One–Stop Centers to channel appropriately the needs of those persons with disabilities who request information and/or services in such centers.

b. Identify possible referrals to the services of the PRVRA.

c. Offer to the staff of the One–Stop Centers, orientation on various topics of interest that are requested and that are related to people with disabilities.

d. Participate actively in job fairs coordinated by the One–Stop Centers.

e. Exchange employment/employer networks.

f. The strategies previously established will allow the achievement of the goals established in Section (I) of this State Plan.

8. HOW THE AGENCY'S STRATEGIES WILL BE USED TO:

A. ACHIEVE GOALS AND PRIORITIES BY THE STATE, CONSISTENT WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT;

All of the PRVRA strategies were developed based on the Comprehensive Needs Assessment Study and WIOA amendments in order to reach the goals and priorities established by the State.

B. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES; AND

The PRVRA will continue identifying innovation and expansion needs. Some of the strategies for doing so are:

a. Expansion of the provision of the services to the blind persons, through referrals for employment to the Puerto Rico for the Blind Company.

b. Expansion of the provision of the services to the blind persons, with intellectual deficit and other disabilities, through training and employment in the Corporation for the Blind.

c. Expansion of the availability of the training resources to the newly recruited staff (e.g. modules), through access to the internal Web page of the agency (Intranet).

d. Continuation with the use of the video remote interpretation technology for the deaf persons.

e. Continuation with the financing of the SRC and the SILC to assist and support their operations as well as to develop, together with the PRVRA, better employment opportunities and independent living for our applicants/consumers.

C. OVERCOME IDENTIFIED BARRIERS RELATING TO EQUITABLE ACCESS TO AND PARTICIPATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM AND THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM.

The PRVRA has available and accessible services to all individuals with disabilities. In order to promote the participation in VR and SE services, the agency staff participates in community orientation activities. There are no differences in terms of availability of services for particular disabilities, cultural or racial groups. Also, the PRVRA performs the necessary steps to continue to ensure that our facilities are accessible to all individuals with disabilities.

P. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

Describe:

1. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE VR PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE APPROVED VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS.

Goal 1 Strengthen the services provision process of applicants/consumers of the PRVRA; emphasizing on compliance with performance indicators and productivity measures established by the federal government and the public policy of the agency.

Indicators:

Number of individuals who have achieved employment outcomes will equal or exceed the previous year.

FY 2013: 3,026 FY 2014: 3,062 FY 2015: 2,943

Of the individuals whose cases were closed after receiving services, the percentage who has achieved employment will equal or exceed 55.80%. FY 2013: 69.79% FY 2014: 66.16% FY 2015: 64.85%

Percentage of individuals who have achieved employment outcomes, with earnings equivalent to at least the federal minimum wage, will equal or exceed 72.60%.

FY 2013: 97.79% FY 2014: 98.73% FY 2015: 97.76%

Percentage of individuals with significant disabilities who have achieved employment outcomes (with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage) will equal or exceed 62.40%. FY 2013: 89.12% FY 2014: 89.25% FY 2015: 86.83%

Average hourly earnings of all individuals who have achieved competitive employment with earnings equivalent to the minimum wage as a ratio to the average hourly earnings for all individuals employed in Puerto Rico, will equal or exceed 0.52.

FY 2013: 0.69 FY 2014: 0.69 FY 2015: 0.73

Of the individuals who have achieved competitive employment, the difference between the percentages of those who reported their own income as the primary source of support at application compared to the income at closure, will equal or exceed 53%.

FY 2013: 94.12% FY 2014: 93.88% FY 2015: 96.28%

Of the individuals who have achieved competitive employment, the average of hours worked per week.

FY 2013: 32.40 FY 2014: 32.14 FY 2015: 32.40

From the total population attended in the PRVRA, the percentage of individuals who received services will equal or exceed 85%. FY 2013: 89.50% FY 2014: 89.00% FY 2014: 89.00%

Percentage of eligible consumers who did not receive services should be less than 25% (attrition).

FY 2015: 12.40%

Eligibility rate of all applications attended in the period, will equal or exceed 85%. FY 2013: 85.49% FY 2014: 84.22% FY 2015: 76.69%

The performance in this indicator may have been affected by various causes; among these, zones that were vacant and adaptation processes of the new VR counselors.

Percentage of individuals served who are beneficiaries of the Social Security Disability Insurance (based on cases closed after receiving services).

FY 2013: 8.44% FY 2014: 9.71% FY 2015: 7.47%

Percentage of beneficiaries of the Social Security Disability Insurance who achieved an employment outcome

FY 2015: 5.2%

Percentage of developed IPEs from the total of eligible cases, will equal or exceed 75% (plan rate).

FY 2013: 94.90% FY 2014: 93.80% FY 2015: 83.72%

Percentage of IPEs developed within 120 days of the cases closed after receiving services (St. 26 & 28), will equal or exceed 85%.

FY 2013: 72.65% FY 2014: 77.48% FY 2015: 80.83%

Strategies:

Strengthen the coordination with the PRDOLHR to know the employment trends and the types of employers.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, staff of the PRDOLHR offered orientation to the staff of the centers of support and employment modes (CSEMs) on the labor market Web page, which includes employment trends. Twenty–four employees (24) were trained. Moreover, the PRVRA can obtain from the official Website of the DLHR the job offers available islandwide.

Continue granting salary incentives to the employers to ensure employment opportunities to the consumers.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, fourteen (14) salary incentive contracts were awarded to nine (9) employers who accepted employing nineteen (19) consumers of the PRVRA.

Continue implementing employment projects through the development of microenterprises.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, one hundred and seventy–seven (177) consumers were referred to the CSEMs for self–employment and 623 consumers were attended. The CSEMs reported to have carried out the following: 211 interviews/screenings related to self–employment for consumers, 135 administrations of the inventory of physical facilities for business, 18 business development courses offered with the participation of 136 consumers (121 completed the course), 484 orientations/technical assistance offered for the development and evaluation of business proposals, and 103 evaluation processes regarding a Business Plan by the Regional Committee of Evaluation of Self–Employment Proposals.

Strengthen the development of commercial enterprises under the State Law No. 140 and Randolph–Sheppard.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, the PRVRA contacted and visited three (3) facilities islandwide for the development of business enterprises. Ninety–one (91) consumers were identified for the development of a commercial enterprise; five (5) were developed and eight (8) remained in process.

Strengthen the coordination of the services between the CSEMs and the centers of assessment and adjustment (CAAs), in order to provide services to those consumers certified in supported employment who are not receiving services in a community rehabilitation program (CRP).

Progress Report: During FY 2015, the CSEMs offered 70 orientation/ technical assistance activities to the staff of the CAAs.

Continue with the programmatic and fiscal monitoring interventions and technical assistance to the CRPs, to ensure quality and agility of services to the consumers with the most significant disabilities.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, the PRVRA conducted two (2) monitoring intervention activities (preliminary and final) to each contracted CRP.

MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE OUTCOMES FOR CRPS, FY 2015

Name of CRP|Date of preliminary monitoring intervention|Outcome|Date of final monitoring intervention|Compliance (%) APNI|Apr/30/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Sept/14/2015|84 CAALPI|May/8/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Sept/4/2015|Final Report of Findings CAPI|March/27/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Aug/19/2015|94 CID|May/7/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Aug/14/2015|90 CNH|April/28/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Aug/17/2015|93 CODERI|May/1/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Aug/20/2015|90 CRECES|Apr/24/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Sept/11/2015|84 FSD|May/6/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Sept/2/2015|89 IPVI|Apr/1/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Sept/1/2015|97 MAVI|Apr/16/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Aug/31/2015|85 PARES|March/19/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Aug/20/2015|93 TCS|Apr/20/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case

Records|Sept/10/2015|93 YAI|March/31/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Sept/9/2015|85 Source: PRVRA.

Continue strengthening the employment skills of the consumers through workshops related to job search how to prepare a resume, and interview processes, among others.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, through the CSEMs, workshops and orientations on job search, preparation of resume and interview processes, among others; were offered to 569 consumers of the PRVRA.

Continue the participation in the One–Stop Centers in order to identify referrals of cases with potential to be served in the PRVRA.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, the One–Stop Centers referred 192 cases to the PRVRA and the PRVRA offered 305 orientations to the staff of such centers.

Continue offering technical assistance to the regions on compliance with performance indicators and measurement criteria.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, the Office of Programmatic Quality Control and Regional Support (OPQCRS) and the Project Management Office, in coordination with the Division of Training and Development of Human Resources, provided orientation to 186 VR counselors (case managers, supervisors, counseling directors, and regional directors) on the measurement criteria and productivity indicators, findings of the Needs Assessment Study and the State Plan. In addition, the OPQCRS sends, on a monthly basis, to the regional directors and to the directors of the VR counseling service centers (VRCSCs), achievement reports on the performance indicators and the measurement standards.

Strengthen the performance of the staff of VRCSCs, through technical assistance and training provided or coordinated by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the Division of Training and Development of Human Resources, on relevant aspects to case management and services provision process.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, training was provided to nine (9) newly recruited VR counselors.

Monthly monitor the percentage of compliance of eligibility determinations on the same day and provision of services for applicants who are Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries.

Progress Report: The PRVRA monitors compliance of this strategy and sends the corresponding monthly report to the regional directors and counseling supervisors. Such information enables the VR counselors to provide the technical assistance or follow up needed.

Work, together with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), the Normative Communications that regulate the provision of services.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, the PRVRA shared with the SRC numerous Normative Communications related to the provision of services and reports and comments on these were received.

Goal 2

Ensure the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to the eligible transition–age students with disabilities, between the ages of 14–24, so that they are able to achieve an employment outcome.

Indicators:

Percentage of closed cases after receiving services of the transition–age consumers (between the ages 14–24), in relation to the total of closures served (transition rate).

FY 2015: 57.23%

Percentage of consumers who achieved an employment in relation to the total of transition closures (between the ages 14–24).

FY 2015: 49.26%

Percentage of eligibility determinations within 60 days of the transition–age consumers (between the ages 14–24), will equal or exceed 85%.

FY 2013: 68.37% FY 2014: 71.85% FY 2015: 95.54%

Percentage of IPEs developed within 120 days of the transition–age consumers (between the ages 14–24), will be 85% or more.

FY 2015: 80.87%

The performance in this indicator may have been affected by various causes; among these, zones that were vacant and adaptation processes of the new VR counselors.

Employment rate of the transition–age (between the ages 14–24) consumers (St. 26 &28) is expected to achieve 75%.

FY 2013: 74.02% FY 2014: 68.65% FY 2015: 69.45%

As a strategy to reduce the number of cases in St. 24, follow up was provided which resulted in an increase of closures in St. 28. This affected the achievement of the employment rate; however, there was improvement in comparison to FY 2014.

Average hourly wage of the transition–age consumers who achieved employment outcomes.

FY 2015: $9.36

Average hours worked per week of the transition–age consumers (between the ages 14–24).

FY 2015: 33.15

Strategies:

Continue the monthly monitoring of eligibility determinations within 60 days, and planning and signature of IPE within 120 days, of the transition–age referred youth to the PRVRA. Progress Report: During 2015, the PRVRA conducted 106 monitoring activities for a total of 202 case records of transition. The Central Office of the PRVRA monitors compliance by region and sends, on a monthly basis, to the regional directors and supervisors a report that includes the eligibility determinations within 60 days as well as the IPEs developed within 120 days.

Monitor the transition process through the computerized application for transition cases (agreement).

Progress Report: The PRVRA generates from the CRIS computerized system, achievements reports that include the number of referred cases of transition, action taken and employment outcomes. These reports are shared with the regions.

Increase the participation of the VR counselor in the meetings on transition–age youth of the Programmatic and Placement Committee (PPC).

Progress Report: During FY 2015, the VR counselors attended 25 meetings of the PPC and the analysts of VR counseling services attended 281 meetings of the PPC and referred 4,712 cases to the PRVRA. In addition, this staff offered 13,722 orientations on the transition process (6,476 orientations to parents, 2,015 orientations to teachers, and 5,231 orientations to students).

Offer orientations in schools on employment opportunities, requirements of occupations and employment goals.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, two (2) pre–employment transition activities were carried out in the Caguas and Bayamón regions, which were attended by students and school staff. Workshops on the labor market, employment goals, job requirements, and pre–employment skills, among others; were offered during such activities.

Offer technical assistance on how to facilitate the transition process to the staff of the Department of Education (DE).

Progress Report: During FY 2015, nine hundred forty–five (945) orientations were offered to the staff of the DE. The report of the analysts of VR counseling services highlights a total of 2,015 orientations on the transition process to teachers.

Continue the identification of the transition–age consumers referred to and served in the CSEMs and the outcomes of said youth in the different employment modes.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, the PRVRA referred 166 transition consumers to the CSEMs and 111 cases were attended (33 cases of regular employment, 70 cases of supported employment and 8 cases of self–employment) with employment outcomes (St. 26).

Goal 3

Articulate the services provision processes in the vocational rehabilitation counseling service centers (VRCSCs); centers of assessment and adjustment (CAAs); and centers of support and employment modes (CSEMs) so that they are directed to the needs of applicants/consumers, emphasizing on those with the most significant disabilities.

Indicators:

Percentage of the persons employed under the supported employment modality in relation to the total number of the consumers rehabilitated.

FY 2013: 5.90% FY 2014: 5.10% FY 2015: 4.62%

Average hours worked per week in competitive employment of the persons certified in supported employment.

FY 2013: 23.42 FY 2014: 24.90 FY 2015: 22.82

Average hourly wage of the consumers employed under the supported employment modality.

FY 2013: $7.47 FY 2014: $7.44 FY 2015: $7.59

Percentage of eligibility determinations within 60 days of the consumers certified in supported employment with employment outcome, will equal or exceed previous fiscal year.

FY 2013: 81.50% FY 2014: 83.44% FY 2015: 91.18%

Percentage of IPEs developed within 120 days of the consumers certified in supported employment with employment outcome, will equal or exceed the previous year.

FY 2013: 59.00% FY 2014: 71.97% FY 2015 83.82%

Percentage of the persons with significant/most significant disabilities who achieved employment outcome, will be no less tan 63%.

FY 2013: 89.19% FY 2014: 89.35% FY 2015: 86.92%

Number of cases with employment outcome who received services in the CAAs.

FY 2013: 235 FY 2014: 161 FY 2015: 130

Number of applicants/consumers served in the CAAs.

FY 2013: 7,494 FY 2014: 6,785 FY 2015: 6, 978

Number of services offered in the CAAs.

FY 2013: 17,474 FY 2014: 18,141 FY 2015: 22,584

Strategies:

Continue monitoring compliance of the CAAs in the provision of support services to the VR counselors within the established public policy (number of vocational evaluations with ecological approach, number of adjustments, and time to carry out such evaluations, among others.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, a computerized system was implemented to register the services provided in the CAAs and time to carry out evaluations, among other data. The programming area is working on the development of reports to be generated by the system.

Continue, though the CSEMs, offering orientation and technical assistance to the staff of the VRCSCs and the CAAs on the jobs in greatest demand, job offers by geographical area, and the skills those consumers must have for employment.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, the CSEMs offered 2,005 orientations and/or technical assistance to the staff of the PRVRA (1,761 to the staff of the VRCSCs, 70 to the staff of the CAAs, and 174 to the administrative staff).

Strengthen the performance of the work teams of the CSEMs, through technical assistance and training in areas related to professional competencies and performance, provided or coordinated by the Office of Support and Employment Modes and the Division of Training and Development of Human Resources.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, four (4) training activities were provided to the staff of the CSEMs, through the Division of Training and Development of Human Resources. In addition, the Office of Support and Employment Modes offered technical assistance, orientations and/or training to 43 employees of the CSEMs.

Strengthen the performance of the work teams of the CAAs, through technical assistance and training in areas related to professional competencies and performance, provided or coordinated by the Office of Assessment and Adjustment (OAA) with the Division of Training and Development of Human Resources.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, eighteen (18) training activities were provided to the staff of the CAAs, through the Division of Training and Development of Human Resources; three (3) of which were coordinated by the OAA.

Establish goals of rehabilitated cases (St. 26) to the analysts of regular placement and self–employment options.

Progress Report: The Agency is carrying out an analysis by regions to set these goals based on the reality of the labor market on each one.

Train the staff of the CAAs to carry out better evaluation processes to the consumers with significant/most significant disabilities in order to assist in identifying supported employment needs.

Progress Report: During 2015, the OAA coordinated with the Division of Training and Development of Human Resources, the following training activities to the staff of the CAAs:

• Changes to the procedure of provision of services in the CAAs–175 participants; • Assistive technology application in vocational evaluation–28 participants; • Use and application of the PRVRA–26 Form in the evaluation and adjustment processes–22 participants;

Application of assistive technology for individuals with visual impairments–23 participants; and Wheelchair evaluation process.

Strengthen the work stations used in the vocational evaluation process and adjust these to the reality of the labor market.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, multiple work stations were strengthened in the following three (3) regions:

• Caguas: food preparation, cosmetology, maintenance, supermarket and pre–employment. • Toa Baja: supermarket, maintenance and laundry. • Arecibo: supermarket with storage room.

Establish in each CSEM, a station with a computer with access to the Internet, so that consumers are able to prepare a resume and complete job applications.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, each CSEM had the necessary computer equipment for that purpose.

Goal 4 Continue the dissemination of information on the services of the PRVRA, in accordance with the eligibility criteria and the provision of rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities.

Indicators:

Number of universities contacted, orientations and persons oriented.

FY 2015: This information is contained in the Indicator 4.2; the refined data for this indicator will be determined in FY 2016.

Number of other institutions of postsecondary education (non–universities) contacted, orientations and persons oriented.

FY 2015: 238 institutions contacted; 3,888 orientations provided; and 5,960 participations (approx.)

Number of other dissemination activities in the community by the PRVRA and/or in coordination with the SRC and persons oriented.

FY 2015: 3 dissemination activities; 101 participating employers; and 63 participants between the PRVRA and the SRC.

Number of employers contacted by the CSEMs and the SRC.

FY 2013: 5,559 FY 2014: 1,742 FY 2015: 3,544

Strategies:

Strengthen the dissemination of information to the employers of the private/public sector on the benefits of employing persons with disabilities who are consumers of the PRVRA.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, three thousand five hundred forty–four (3,544) contacts took place with employers of the private/public sectors (1,697 orientations, 1,286 technical assistance activities, and 561 related activities). In addition, the OSEM carried out 41 formal and informal

meetings with the CRPs, partners, employers, and participating entities on federal regulations and the public policy.

Continue the dissemination of information on the revision of the State Plan to be presented at public hearings to ensure participation of applicants/consumers, public at large, and agency staff.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, VR agencies were not required to present a State Plan to the federal government, neither for public comments. A Unified State Plan will be presented for public comments during FY 2016.

Provide orientation to the VR staff on the organizational structure and the duties carried out by each area of the agency, so that they are able to know their role within the services provision process.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, orientation was provided to seventeen (17) employees of the agency.

Carry out dissemination activities on the services of the PRVRA in the institutions of postsecondary education, emphasizing on the third eligibility criterion.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, the regions contacted 238 institutions of postsecondary education, provided orientation to 3,888 persons and offered 443 orientations to the community.

Continue the participation in dissemination activities in the community on the part of the PRVRA and/or in coordination with the SRC.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, the SRC carried out three (3) activities with employers in coordination with the PRVRA. One hundred and one (101) employers participated in these activities, as well as 63 participants distributed between the CER, the PRVRA, and other resources.

Continue the participation in the One–Stop Centers to bring possible referrals to the PRVRA and to participate in employment activities.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, the One–Stop Centers referred 192 cases to the PRVRA and the PRVRA offered 305 orientations to the staff of the One–Stop Centers.

Develop a dissemination plan on radio and TV to expand the scope of services of the PRVRA.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, the PRVRA participated in the following five (5) dissemination activities in the media:

• Interview with the Rubén Sánchez radio program (January 9 of 2015). • Interview "Máxima 740" (radio) program (May 27 of 2015). • Interview with Sandra Caquías, El Nuevo Día newspaper (August 5 of 2015). • Interview with Normando Valentín, WKAQ 580 radio (August 6 of 2015). • Interview with Rafael Lenín López, Radio Isla (August 7 of 2015).

Goal 5 Strengthen the administrative/fiscal/programmatic procedures in order to comply with the regulations established and the institutional efficiency required.

Indicators:

Number, content and application of training offered to staff.

FY 2013: ten (10) or more per year FY 2014: ten (10) or more per year FY 2015: ten (10) or more per year

Number of staff evaluated in the performance of their duties.

FY 2013: 29 employees FY 2014: 70 employees FY 2015: 681 employees

Number of answered complaints within 30 days. FY 2013: 90% FY 2014: 100% FY 2015: 100%

Number of revised procedures. FY 2013: three (3) or more per year FY 2014: three (3) or more per year FY 2015: three (3) or more per year

Strategies:

Offer training to the staff to strengthen the knowledge and the skills needed in the performance of their duties.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, one hundred forty–nine (149) training activities were offered and 2,244 participations to the staff of the PRVRA, through the Division of Training and Human Resources.

Carry out periodic performance evaluations of the agency staff to ensure institutional efficiency.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, six hundred eighty–one (681) employees were evaluated in the performance of their duties. In addition, four (4) training activities were carried out related to the evaluation of the PRVRA staff performance. Seventy–eight (78) people participated in these activities.

Maintain the financial support level of the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), in order to assist and support their operations; and in coordination with the PRVRA, develop employment opportunities and independent living for our applicants/consumers.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, the PRVRA awarded the SILC the amount of $76,989 and the SRC the amount of $80,419 to continue supporting their operations; and in coordination with the PRVRA, develop employment opportunities and independent living for our applicants/consumers.

Update the administrative/fiscal/programmatic procedures in accordance with the established state and federal regulations.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, the PRVRA developed and disseminated 41 communications (4 administrative, 12 informative, and 25 normative), in order to establish procedures and public policy in accordance with the current state and federal regulations.

Continue to support all areas of the agency in the use of available computer systems, and develop applications to streamline processes, reports and procedures according to the needs presented by areas and, at the same time, consulted with the service/administrative staff.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, the Information Systems Office updated its Manual of Policies and Procedures of the Information Systems Office.

Carry out participation meetings on aspects related to the public policy with the staff of the agency.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, the Area of Operational Policies carried out meetings in each of the six (6) regions of the agency to discuss several communications on public issues.

Carry out monitoring interventions to ensure compliance with the procedures.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, the VR Counseling Services Office conducted 564 monitoring interventions to 1,669 case records to ensure compliance with the procedures and the public policy of the PRVRA. The Office of Programmatic Quality Control and Regional Support conducted 10 monitoring interventions to 10 case records.

The following is an evaluation and progress report of the goals and plans identified in the Attachment 4.11(c)(4) for the distribution of Title VI, Part B funds for FY 2015:

Goal A

Serve at least 250 new consumers in the supported employment modality.

Progress Report: The PRVRA, through its centers of support and employment modes, served 1,019 consumers of supported employment.

Goal B Maintain a level of satisfaction of 85% of those consumers who received supported employment services at the closure of the case.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, a satisfaction level of 100% was achieved from the consumers who received supported employment services.

Plans:

Use other sources of funding, in addition to the ones from Title VI, Part B, needed to expand the provision of the supported employment services.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, the PRVRA used funds from Title I for the provision of the supported employment services.

Contract and support the community rehabilitations programs (CRPs) throughout the Island so that at least 180 consumers, who received the supported employment services, are able to achieve an employment outcome.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, 185 consumers, who received supported employment services, were attended; of which 136 achieved an employment outcome. The PRVRA contracted thirteen (13) CRPs, which served 167 new supported employment consumers and 263 carry over cases, for a total of 430 supported employment consumers served.

The factors that affected not reaching the goal were: the fiscal crisis the country is experiencing which significantly affects employers, who have had to cut hours and staff due to a reduction in sales and services. On the other hand, the demand for qualified candidates without disabilities and unemployed, negatively affects the promotion and selection of candidates of the PRVRA. There has also been an increase in the number of consumers who have problems with the use of controlled substances or dual diagnoses with no current treatment, as well as consumers with problems in the family nucleus or transportation. All these factors are the reasons most relevant and repetitive in the reports submitted by the CRPs, as to the limitations found in the process of job promotion and placement of the supported employment consumers.

Strengthen the provision of supported employment services through training and technical assistance to the staff of the CRPs. The Office of Support and Employment Modes (OSEM) and the centers of support and employment modes (CSEMs) will provide such technical assistance in aspects such as:

1. Orientation on the guide to submit proposals;

2. Orientation for the development of extended supports; and

3. Other aspects related to the provision of supported employment services.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, the OSEM conducted one (1) formal meeting and 27 informal ones with the CRPs. Also, in the process of receiving proposals for the provision of supported employment services, the following activities were carried out: seven (7) orientations were offered on the guide to submit proposals; 18 proposals were received; 17 were evaluated; 13 accepted and five (5) were rejected/not accepted. Thirteen (13) CRPs were contracted.

In addition, the OSEM will participate, in coordination with the Division of Training and Development of Human Resources of the agency, in the planning and development of training activities for the CRPs and the staff of the PRVRA, in accordance with the needs identified in the monitoring processes and needs studies.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, the CSEMs participated in four (4) training activities in coordination with the Division of Training and Development of Human Resources.

Continue administering satisfaction surveys of the consumer in terms of the services received in the CRPs and in the CSEMs of the PRVRA, in order to identify areas to be strengthened or improved.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, the CSEMs reported that the consumers who received services in the CRPs recorded to be 100% satisfied with such services.

Continue conducting monitoring interventions to the CRPs in order to validate compliance with the provision of the services established in the contracts.

Progress Report: The following are the monitoring activities conducted during FY 2015 with the contracted CRPs:

MONITORING OUTCOMES OF CRPS

Name of CRP|Date of Preliminary Monitoring Intervention|Outcome|Date of Final Monitoring Intervention|Compliance (%) APNI|Apr/30/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Sept/14/2015|84 CAALPI|May/8/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Sept/4/2015|Final Report of Findings CAPI|March/27/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Aug/19/2015|94 CID|May/7/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Aug/14/2015|90 CNH|April/28/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Aug/17/2015|93 CODERI|May/1/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Aug/20/2015|90 CRECES|Apr/24/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Sept/11/2015|84 FSD|May/6/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Sept/2/2015|89 IPVI|Apr/1/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Sept/1/2015|97 MAVI|Apr/16/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Aug/31/2015|85 PARES|March/19/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Aug/20/2015|93 TCS|Apr/20/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Sept/10/2015|93 YAI|March/31/2015|Report of Findings and Evaluation of Case Records|Sept/9/2015|85 Source: PRVRA.

Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds:

The estimated total of projected funds for the provision of the supported employment services during FY 2015 is $4,475,617 distributed as follows: $300,000 from Title VI–B for the contacting of CRPs; and $4,175,617 from Title I for the contracting of other CRPs and expenses related to the supported employment services.

Progress Report: The PRVRA used $2,460,124.64 distributed as follows: $2,160,124.64 from Title I; and $300,000 from Title VI–B for the contracting of CRPs.

B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES.

The economic situation of the Island affected the amount of successful closure of cases.

2. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SUPPLEMENT FOR THE MOST RECENT PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS.

Please, refer to section p., above.

B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES.

The economic situation of the Island affected the availability of employers to recruit, which in turn affected the amount of supported employment successful closures.

3. THE VR PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA.

Since VR Agencies will start to measure WIOA section 116 performance indicators in July 2016, we have no previous year's performance data on those indicators and we are providing performance information of the current indicators.

The following were the evaluation standards of the PRVRA for FY 2015.

Number of individuals who have achieved employment outcomes will equal or exceed the previous year. FY 2013: 3,026 FY 2014: 3,062 FY 2015: 2,943

Of the individuals whose cases were closed after receiving services, the percentage who has achieved employment. Federal Requirement: 55.80% FY 2013: 69.79% FY 2014: 66.16% FY 2015: 64.85%

Percentage of the individuals who have achieved employment outcomes with earnings equivalent to at least the federal minimum wage. Federal Requirement: 72.60% FY 2013: 97.79% FY 2014: 98.73% FY 2015: 97.76%

Percentage of the individuals with significant disabilities who have achieved competitive employment (with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage). Federal Requirement: 62.40% FY 2013: 89.12% FY 2014: 89.25% FY 2015: 86.83%

Average hourly earnings of the individuals who have achieved employment outcomes with earnings equivalent to the minimum wage, as a ratio to the average hourly earnings for all individuals employed in Puerto Rico. Federal Requirement: 0.52 FY 2013: 0.69 FY 2014: 0.69 FY 2015: 0.73

Of the individuals who have achieved competitive employment, the difference between the percentages of those who reported their own income as the primary source of support at application compared to the income at closure. Federal Requirement: 53% FY 2013: 94.12% FY 2014: 93.88% FY 2015: 96.28%

Evaluation Standard 2.1: FY 2015: 1.17

Puerto Rico complies with this standard due to the fact that most of its population is of Hispanic or Latino origin.

4. HOW THE FUNDS RESERVED FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION (I&E) ACTIVITIES WERE UTILIZED.

The PRVRA carried out the following I&E activities:

Expansion of the provision of services to the blind persons through a collaborative employment agreement with the Winston–Salem Company.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, the PRVRA referred ten (10) consumers to the Puerto Rico for the Blind (formerly Winston–Salem); of which four (4) were recruited.

Expansion of the provision of services to the blind persons with intellectual deficit and other disabilities, through training and employment in the Corporation for the Blind.

Progress Report: The PRVRA visited this Corporation with the purpose of identifying areas that could be used for ecological assessment processes to the consumers. It is projected that consumers may be employed, as permitted by their fiscal situation.

Expansion of the provision of services to those persons with disabilities product of car accidents, through a collaborative agreement with the Administration of Automobile Accident Compensation.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, thirty–seven (37) active cases were reported in the PRVRA from the Administration of Automobile Accident Compensation; and eight (8) cases were closed as rehabilitated.

Extension of the availability of training resources to the newly recruited staff (example: modules) through access to the internal Web page of the agency (Intranet).

Progress Report: During FY 2015, a “Training” section was created in Intranet under which two (2) training modules were placed for VR counselors.

Continuation with the use of the video remote interpretation technology for the deaf persons.

Progress Report: The PRVRA has such technology in all its regions and is available for the deaf persons, when necessary.

Continuation with the financing of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) to assist and support their operations as well as to develop, together with the PRVRA, better employment opportunities and independent living for our applicants/consumers.

Progress Report: During FY 2015, the PRVRA awarded to the SRC the amount of $80,419.48 and to the SILC the amount of $76,989.64; in order to continue supporting their operations and works in conjunction with the PRVRA.

Q. QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.

Include the following:

1. THE QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES.

Quality

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of July 22 of 2014, emphasizes on the provision of the supported employment services for the consumers with the most significant disabilities. Therefore, the PRVRA in its mission to integrate the people with disabilities into the labor force and towards a more independent living, promotes the provision of the supported employment services leading to an employment outcome.

The Office of Support and Employment Modes (OSEM), at the central level of the PRVRA, intends to collaborate, provide assistance and facilitate the applicability of the public policy to the center of support and employment modes (CSEM), at the regional level, on career development services, services to employers and development of support and employment modes for the consumers. The OSEM staff contributes with other operational/administrative offices of the PRVRA, in the coordination and collaboration of efforts regarding the assessment services and the programmatic monitoring and interpretation of data/relevant information to ensure compliance with the State Plan, the Work Plan and the Strategic Plan of the agency.

The PRVRA, though its CSEMs, develops inter/transdisciplinary work teams to ensure that the supported employment services are provided uniformly, agile and responsive to the needs of the consumers with the most significant disabilities, including youth.

Scope

The supported employment services are provided for a period not to exceed twenty-four (24) months, except in special circumstances, pursuant to 34 CFR 363.6(c)(1)(iii)(A).

The VR counselor identifies those consumers with the most significant disabilities, including youth, who could benefit from supported employment, in accordance with the federal provisions set forth in 34 CFR 361.34. Such identification begins with the initial interview, the analysis of medical evidence, the analysis of pre-employment skills and any other aspect relevant to the evaluation process.

The supported employment modality is provided through the CSEMs of the PRVRA; which offer support to the VR counselor in order to validate the vocational strengths and needs of the applicants/consumers, as well as to promote them towards competitive employment under such supported employment modality. Prior to the consumer's referral to the CSEM, he may receive services in the center of assessment and adjustment (CAA) of the PRVRA in order to be evaluated in the following areas:

• Personal skills, daily/family/community living

• Cognitive-Psychosocial skills

• Perceptual-Psychomotor skills

• Training, Job and Work skills

The referral to the CAA will identify that the consumer will be sent to a community rehabilitation program (CRP) to be serviced under the supported employment modality, whereby the evaluation process must have an ecological approach.

The supported employment process has been framed within the following five (5) stages developed for the provision of these services:

Stage I. Determination of Needs/Comprehensive Assessment

• Revision of documents: assessment of pre-employment skills, needs and support resources

• Comprehensive evaluation

• Determination of needs through profile evaluation

• Support: consumer and family

• Drafting of Habilitation Plan.

Stage II. Vocational Preparation/Supplementary Assessment

• Implementation of Habilitation Plan

• Supplementary evaluation

• Situational evaluation with ecological approach

• Career development

• Revision of Habilitation Plan (if it applies)

• Ecological Evaluation Report

• Continuous support

Stage III. Placement Services

• Marketing Plan

• Promotion

• Occupational analysis

• Job proposal

• Reasonable accommodation

• Recruitment process

• Revision and editing of Habilitation Plan (if it applies)

• Meetings with the employer and the family

• Continuous support.

Stage IV. Training and Job Retention

• Intensive and moderate training

• Development of natural support networks

• Revision of Habilitation Plan (if it applies)

• Evaluation/monitoring

• Submittal of reports

• Meetings with the employer and the family

• Continuous support

Stage V. Stabilization and Closure

• Meetings with the employer and the family

• Beginning of the employment monitoring phase (minimum of 90 days)

• Evaluations and performance/production monitoring

• Identification of the extended support sources and their availability

• Evaluation of the services (satisfaction survey).

The PRVRA, through the OSEM and the CSEMs, provides technical assistance to the contracted CRPs. In addition, it conducts two (2) annual programmatic monitoring interventions. The CRPs develop and apply the satisfaction surveys to consumers, family members and employers.

The previous information about quality, scope and extent of services apply to youth. The PRVRA will continue to provide SE services to youth with the most significant disabilities referred from Transition. Through CRIS case management system the CSEM will identify those consumers between ages 14-24.

2. THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES.

In accordance with WIOA, the PRVRA will make available the resources for extended support services for the youth with the most significant disabilities, for a period not exceeding four (4) years. These services will be provided through the contracting of CRPs, from the first quarter after the exit from the program.

In order to improve the quality, the scope and the extent of the supported employment services, the PRVRA is committed to meet the goals and the strategies established and described in the Part (n) of this State Plan document.

CERTIFICATIONS

Name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate **Vocational Rehabilitation Administration**

Name of designated State agency **Department of Labor and Human Resources**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Iván A. Clemente Delgado, Esq.**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Administrator**

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. The **designated State agency or designated State unit (as appropriate) listed above** is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by WIOA*, and its supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.** Yes

2. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the **designated State agency listed above** agrees to operate and administer the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan , the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of VR services and the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan; Yes

3. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated State agency agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan* , the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;** Yes

4. The designated State agency and/or the designated State unit has the authority under State law to perform the functions of the State regarding the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement; Yes

5. The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement. Yes

6. All provisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law. Yes

7. The **Authorized Representative listed above** has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement; Yes

8. The **Authorized Representative listed above** has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services; Yes

9. The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement. Yes

FOOTNOTES

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Certification 1 Footnotes

* Public Law 113-128.

** Unless otherwise stated, "Rehabilitation Act" means the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA, signed into law on July 22, 2014.

Certification 2 Footnotes

* All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

** No funds under title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

*** Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76,77,79,81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3485; and the State VR Services Program regulations.

Certification 3 Footnotes

* No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

** Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in *** under Certification 2 footnotes

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON THE CERTIFICATIONS FROM THE STATE

CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING — VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions.

(3) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

STATEMENT FOR LOAN GUARANTEES AND LOAN INSURANCE

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:
If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

Applicant’s Organization **Vocational Rehabilitation Administration**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Iván A. Clemente Delgado, Esq.**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Administrator**

SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (only if applicable) (http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html). If applicable, please print, sign, and email to MAT_OCTAE@ed.gov

CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING — SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions.

(3) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

STATEMENT FOR LOAN GUARANTEES AND LOAN INSURANCE

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:
If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

Applicant's Organization **Vocational Rehabilitation Administration**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Iván A. Clemente Delgado**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Administrator**

SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (only if applicable)
(http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html).

ASSURANCES

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances:**The State Plan must provide assurances that:**

1. PUBLIC COMMENT ON POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.

2. SUBMISSION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT:

The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.

3. ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN:

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:

A. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS REQUIRED BY SECTION 101(A)(2) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

B. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF EITHER A STATE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION OR STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, AS REQUIRED BY SECTION 101(A)(21) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable **(B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council**

C. CONSULTATIONS REGARDING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(16)(B) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

D. THE FINANCIAL PARTICIPATION BY THE STATE, OR IF THE STATE SO ELECTS, BY THE STATE AND LOCAL AGENCIES, TO PROVIDE THE AMOUNT OF THE NON-FEDERAL SHARE OF THE COST OF CARRYING OUT THE VR PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(3).

E. THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(2)(A) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

The designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds **No**

F. THE SHARED FUNDING AND ADMINISTRATION OF JOINT PROGRAMS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(2)(A)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

The designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs: **No**

G. STATEWIDENESS AND WAIVERS OF STATEWIDENESS REQUIREMENTS, AS SET FORTH IN SECTION 101(A)(4) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

Is the designated State agency requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan? See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan. **No**

H. THE DESCRIPTIONS FOR COOPERATION, COLLABORATION, AND COORDINATION, AS REQUIRED BY SECTIONS 101(A)(11) AND (24)(B); AND 606(B) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

I. ALL REQUIRED METHODS OF ADMINISTRATION, AS REQUIRED BY SECTION 101(A)(6) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT .

J. THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT, AS SET FORTH IN SECTION 101(A)(7) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

K. THE COMPILATION AND SUBMISSION TO THE COMMISSIONER OF STATEWIDE ASSESSMENTS, ESTIMATES, STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES, STRATEGIES, AND PROGRESS REPORTS, AS APPROPRIATE, AND AS REQUIRED BY SECTIONS 101(A)(15), 105(C)(2), AND 606(B)(8) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

L. THE RESERVATION AND USE OF A PORTION OF THE FUNDS ALLOTTED TO THE STATE UNDER SECTION 110 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH

DISABILITIES, PARTICULARLY INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES.

M. THE SUBMISSION OF REPORTS AS REQUIRED BY SECTION 101(A)(10) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

4. ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES:

The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:

A. COMPLY WITH ALL REQUIREMENTS REGARDING INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTIONS 101(A)(5)(D) AND (20) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

B. IMPOSE NO DURATION OF RESIDENCE REQUIREMENT AS PART OF DETERMINING AN INDIVIDUAL'S ELIGIBILITY FOR VR SERVICES OR THAT EXCLUDES FROM SERVICES UNDER THE PLAN ANY INDIVIDUAL WHO IS PRESENT IN THE STATE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(12) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT .

C. PROVIDE THE FULL RANGE OF SERVICES LISTED IN SECTION 103(A) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT AS APPROPRIATE, TO ALL ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE WHO APPLY FOR SERVICES IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(5) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT?

Agency will provide the full range of services described above

D. DETERMINE WHETHER COMPARABLE SERVICES AND BENEFITS ARE AVAILABLE TO THE INDIVIDUAL IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(8) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

E. COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 102(B) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

F. COMPLY WITH REQUIREMENTS REGARDING THE PROVISIONS OF INFORMED CHOICE FOR ALL APPLICANTS AND ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 102(D) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

G. PROVIDE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES TO AMERICAN INDIANS WHO ARE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING IN THE STATE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(13) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

H. COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CONDUCT OF SEMIANNUAL OR ANNUAL REVIEWS, AS APPROPRIATE, FOR INDIVIDUALS EMPLOYED EITHER IN AN EXTENDED EMPLOYMENT SETTING IN A COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAM OR ANY OTHER EMPLOYMENT UNDER SECTION 14(C) OF THE FAIR

LABOR STANDARDS ACT OF 1938, AS REQUIRED BY SECTION 101(A)(14)OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

I. MEET THE REQUIREMENTS IN SECTIONS 101(A)(17) AND 103(B)(2) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT IF THE STATE ELECTS TO CONSTRUCT, UNDER SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, FACILITIES FOR COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

J. WITH RESPECT TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, THE STATE,

I. HAS DEVELOPED AND WILL IMPLEMENT,
A. STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS IDENTIFIED IN THE ASSESSMENTS; AND
B. STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED BY THE STATE, TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES ON A STATEWIDE BASIS; AND
II. HAS DEVELOPED AND WILL IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES TO PROVIDE PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES (SECTIONS 101(A)(15) AND 101(A)(25)).

5. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION FOR THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT TITLE VI SUPPLEMENT:

A. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT ASSURES THAT IT WILL INCLUDE IN THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN ALL INFORMATION REQUIRED BY SECTION 606 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

B. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY ASSURES THAT IT WILL SUBMIT REPORTS IN SUCH FORM AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH SUCH PROCEDURES AS THE COMMISSIONER MAY REQUIRE AND COLLECTS THE INFORMATION REQUIRED BY SECTION 101(A)(10) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT SEPARATELY FOR INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES UNDER TITLE I AND INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

C. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL COORDINATE ACTIVITIES WITH ANY OTHER STATE AGENCY THAT IS FUNCTIONING AS AN EMPLOYMENT NETWORK UNDER THE TICKET TO WORK AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAM UNDER SECTION 1148 OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT.

6. FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM:

A. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY ASSURES THAT IT WILL EXPEND NO MORE THAN 2.5 PERCENT OF THE STATE'S ALLOTMENT UNDER TITLE VI FOR ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS OF CARRYING OUT THIS PROGRAM; AND, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR AGENCIES WILL PROVIDE, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY THROUGH PUBLIC OR PRIVATE ENTITIES, NON-FEDERAL CONTRIBUTIONS IN AN AMOUNT THAT IS NOT LESS THAN 10 PERCENT OF THE

COSTS OF CARRYING OUT SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROVIDED TO YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES WITH THE FUNDS RESERVED FOR SUCH PURPOSE UNDER SECTION 603(D) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 606(B)(7)(G) AND (H) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

B. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY ASSURES THAT IT WILL USE FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT ONLY TO PROVIDE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING EXTENDED SERVICES TO YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, WHO ARE ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE SUCH SERVICES; AND, THAT SUCH FUNDS ARE USED ONLY TO SUPPLEMENT AND NOT SUPPLANT THE FUNDS PROVIDED UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, WHEN PROVIDING SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES SPECIFIED IN THE INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 606(B)(7)(A) AND (D), OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

7. PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES:

A. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY ASSURES THAT IT WILL PROVIDE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AS DEFINED IN SECTION 7(39) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

B. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY ASSURES THAT:

I. THE COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF INDIVIDUALS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES CONDUCTED UNDER SECTION 102(B)(1) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT AND FUNDED UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT INCLUDES CONSIDERATION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT AS AN APPROPRIATE EMPLOYMENT OUTCOME, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF SECTION 606(B)(7)(B) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT

II. AN INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT THAT MEETS THE REQUIREMENTS OF SECTION 102(B) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT , WHICH IS DEVELOPED AND UPDATED WITH TITLE I FUNDS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTIONS 102(B)(3)(F) AND 606(B)(6)(C) AND (E) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON THE ASSURANCES FROM THE STATE

VII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS

States choosing to submit a Combined State Plan must provide information concerning the six core programs—the Adult Program, Dislocated Worker Program, Youth Program, Wagner-Peyser Act Program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program, and the Vocational Rehabilitation Program— and also submit relevant information for any of the eleven partner programs it includes in its Combined State Plan. When a State includes a Combined State Plan partner program in its Combined State Plan, it need not submit a separate plan or application for that particular program.* If included, Combined State Plan partner programs are subject to the "common planning elements" in Sections II and III of that document, where specified, as well as the program-specific requirements for that program (available on www.regulations.gov for public comment). The requirements that a State must address for any of the partner programs it includes in its Combined State Plan are provided in this separate supplemental document. The Departments are not seeking comments on these program-specific requirements, which exist under separate OMB control numbers and do not represent requirements under WIOA. For further details on this overall collection, access the Federal eRulemaking Portal at http://www.regulations.gov by selecting Docket ID number ETA-2015-0006.

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* States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.) under a Combined State Plan would submit all other required elements of a complete CSBG State Plan directly to the Federal agency that administers the program. Similarly, States that elect to include employment and training activities carried by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) and 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 that are included would submit all other required elements of a complete State Plan for those programs directly to the Federal agency that administers the program.

APPENDIX 1. PERFORMANCE GOALS FOR THE CORE PROGRAMS

Include the State's expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability indicators based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA.

Instructions:Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each State submitting a Unified or Combined Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The State is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education on state adjusted levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

TABLE 1. EMPLOYMENT (SECOND QUARTER AFTER EXIT)

Program	PY 2016 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2016 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2017 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2017 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
Adults	35.00	35.00	36.00	36.00
Dislocated Workers	63.00	63.00	64.00	64.00
Youth	41.00	41.00	42.00	42.00
Adult Education	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Wagner-Peyser	44.00	44.00	45.00	45.00
Vocational Rehabilitation</	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

User remarks on Table 1

TABLE 2. EMPLOYMENT (FOURTH QUARTER AFTER EXIT)

Program	PY 2016 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2016 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2017 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2017 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
Adults	34.00	34.00	35.00	35.00
Dislocated Workers	42.00	42.00	43.00	43.00
Youth	55.00	55.00	56.00	56.00
Adult Education	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Wagner-Peyser	44.50	44.50	46.00	46.00
Vocational Rehabilitation	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

User remarks on Table 2

TABLE 3. MEDIAN EARNINGS (SECOND QUARTER AFTER EXIT)

Program	PY 2016 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2016 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2017 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2017 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
Adults	2,400.00	2,400.00	2,500.00	2,500.00
Dislocated Workers	3,000.00	3,000.00	3,050.00	3,050.00
Youth	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Adult Education	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Wagner-Peyser	2,800.00	2,800.00	2,900.00	2,900.00
Vocational Rehabilitation	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

User remarks on Table 3

TABLE 4. CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT RATE

Program	PY 2016 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2016 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2017 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2017 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
Adults	64.00	64.00	65.00	65.00
Dislocated Workers	58.00	58.00	59.00	59.00
Youth	32.00	32.00	33.00	33.00
Adult Education	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Wagner-Peyser	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Vocational Rehabilitation	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

User remarks on Table 4

TABLE 5. MEASUREABLE SKILL GAINS

Program	PY 2016 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2016 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2017 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2017 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
Adults	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Dislocated Workers	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Youth	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Adult Education	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Wagner-Peyser	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Vocational Rehabilitation	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

User remarks on Table 5

TABLE 6. EFFECTIVENESS IN SERVING EMPLOYERS

Program	PY 2016 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2016 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2017 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2017 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
Adults	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Dislocated Workers	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Youth	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Adult Education	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Wagner-Peyser	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Vocational Rehabilitation	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

User remarks on Table 6

TABLE 7. COMBINED FEDERAL PARTNER MEASURES

Measure	PY 2016 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2016 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2017 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2017 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level

User remarks on Table 7

APPENDIX 2. OTHER STATE ATTACHMENTS (OPTIONAL)

INDUSTRY SECTOR DETAILS AND SNAPSHOT

AGRICULTURE SECTOR Share of GDP 2014 (%): 1.12 Change in share of GDP 2010-2014 (%): -0.39 Share of nonfarm industrial employment 2014 (%): 3.05 Change in share of nonfarm industrial employment 2012-2014 (%): -22.7 Number of establishments 2014-4QT: 1,898 Average size of establishments 2014-4QT: 15 Value of exports (as % of total): 0.11 Related Personal consumption expenditure 2014: Food: $9.33BN

Agriculture sector provided just below 1.7% of the total employment in 2014, down from close to a third in the first half of the 20th century, which attests to the extent of the industrialization process that determined Puerto Rico's economy. By 1929, the sector's share of national income was close to half.

Agriculture SWOT in relation to workforce development (PRPB. Puerto Rico Economic Development Plan (2015): Agriculture): Strengths - R&D activities in crop and animal biotechnology, food science and technology, tropical crops pest management and tropical farm animal diseases are being conducted and formal education at the undergraduate and graduate level in 11 major fields and informal education are offered based on indigenous research results; Weaknesses - Shortage of farm labor especially in mountain range where most agricultural practices cannot be mechanized due to topography. Migration and low birth rates may result in a slow growth of demand for agricultural and food products; Opportunities - Opportunities to increase activity in other economic sectors due to the existing agribusiness linkages such as the food industry and the bio-industry for local and export markets; Threats - Aging agricultural community: average age of farmers is 59 and the number of young farmers is rapidly decreasing. The concern is: Who will be future producers?

CONSTRUCTION SUBSECTOR SNAPSHOT (SOURCE: PRDOLHR, OES ESTIMATES 2012, 2014; QCEW 4-14.)

Share of GDP 2014 (%):1.12 Change in share of GDP 2010-2014 (%):-0.39 Share of nonfarm industrial employment 2014 (%):3.05 Change in share of nonfarm industrial employment 2012-2014 (%):-22.7 Number of establishments 2014-4QT: 1898 Average size of establishments 2014-4QT: 15

According to the PRPB, the construction sector investment generates a more than proportional impact upon employment, due to strong sector linkages in the economy; nevertheless, government spending, which amounts close to half of total construction investment will likely continue to recede.

Construction Sector SWOT in relation to workforce development: Strengths - Diversity of Contractors, there exists a large and varied labor force in this sub-sector, which can perform infrastructure projects of heterogeneous scale and complexity.

MANUFACTURING SECTOR SNAPSHOT Source: PRDOLHR, OES Estimates 2012, 2014; QCEW 4-14. PRPB: Statistical Appendix 2014.

Share of GDP 2014 (%):47.58 Change in share of GDP 2010-2014 (%):0.24 Share of nonfarm industrial employment 2014 (%):0.00 Change in share of nonfarm industrial employment 2012-2014 (%):-29.1 Number of establishments 2014:1817 Average size of establishments 2014:42 Value of exports as % of total:98.93%

The manufacture sector has a strong positive relationship with total employment in Puerto Rico. Notwithstanding, in the span of the last decade, almost all Manufacturing subsectors has lost some of their share to three other subsectors: Computer and Electronic Products, which doubled its share of the Manufacturing sector; Beverage and Tobacco Products expanding 20.3%; and Electrical Equipment, Appliance and Components at 16.6%. The largest shares were lost by the subsectors of Petroleum and Coal Products, Nonmetallic Mineral Products, Apparel and Related Products, Fabricated Metal Products and Furniture and Related Products. When looked at the shifts from 2011 to 2014, the subsectors of Food and Kindred Products and Paper and Allied Products were striding back to previous levels while those of Apparel and Related Products, Primary Metal and Leather Products, seemed to accelerate their respective decreases.

Jobs committed through the Puerto Rico's Industrial Development Company's industrial promotions decreased 56% (62% in payroll) from 2008, at the peak of manufacturing output supported by 936, to 2015. As significant, investments committed dropped by 71%.

Manufacturing SWOT in relation to workforce development: ? Strengths - Puerto Rico has lower wages rates than the United States and high labor productivity and an extended industrial production experience. ? Weaknesses -Labor compensation is high compared to some developing countries. Incomplete Business Clusters (lack of universities and others research institutions participation). Under-developed entrepreneurial spirit." ? Opportunities -Manufacturing expertise transferrable from principal industries (principally non-locals) to other industries. From foreign firms to local producers (spillovers). Human resources and infrastructure required for developing local firms innovation activities. ? Threats - Skilled labor outmigration. Absence of strategies to increase industrial linkages (between local producers). PRPB. Puerto Rico Economic Development Plan (2015): Manufacturing, (Draft).

FOOD AND KINDRED PRODUCTS SUBSECTOR SNAPSHOT Source: PRDOLHR, OES Estimates 2012, 2014; QCEW 4-14. PRPB: Statistical Appendix 2014

Share of GDP 2014 (%):2.01 Change in share of GDP 2010-2014 (%):0.25 Share of nonfarm industrial employment 2014 (%):1.32 Change in share of nonfarm industrial employment 2012-2014 (%):0.9 Number of establishments 2014:587 Average size of establishments 2014:20 Value of exports as % of total: 3.91% Related Personal consumption expenditure 2014: Food: $9.33BN .

In 2014, the food sector accounted for 6.2 percent of the total manufacturing's exports and 7.8 of the manufacturing's imports. In 2012, Puerto Ricans spent 14.6% of total consumption expenditure in food. As noted by the PRPB, a key characteristic of this sector is that it imports a large portion of its raw materials, thus this sub-sector does not have a strong link with the agriculture sector of the island. As with the apparel subsector, therein lies the growth potential of the subsector.

APPAREL SUBSECTOR SNAPSHOT Source: PRDOLHR, OES Estimates 2012, 2014; QCEW 4-14. PRPB: Statistical Appendix 2014.

Share of GDP 2014 (%):0.23 Change in share of GDP 2010-2014 (%):-0.37 Share of nonfarm industrial employment 2014 (%):0.60 Change in share of nonfarm industrial employment 2012-2014 (%):-42.2 Number of establishments 2014:70 Average size of establishments 2014:85 Value of exports (as % of total):0.14 Related Personal consumption expenditure 2014: Clothing and Accessories:$3.55BN

Having a strong presence in the production of the USA's military apparel and accessories, the apparel subsector employed close to 14% of the total manufacturing's employment in the Island in 2012. In 2014, that share was at 8.4% and its GDP output continued its decline. Nevertheless, some opportunities remain due to the fact that personal expenditure in clothing and accessories exceeded $3.5 billion in 2014, mostly on imported goods. With the Berry Amendment stipulating that all Department of Defense purchases must originate from an American territory, Puerto Rico remains an appealing destination for U.S. military apparel contracts. The Island currently ranks second in Department of Defense contracts in this sector. New innovations in the apparel industry are occurring at a pace that has never been seen before due to research and development with the use of nanotechnology. For the Department of Defense, "intelligent textiles" are being developed in Puerto Rico that allow complex systems to be integrated into military combat uniforms unobtrusively such as enhanced body armor, flame-resistant gear and new fibers that halt bacteria growth to limit infection in wounded soldiers.

CHEMICAL AND ALLIED PRODUCTS SUBSECTOR SNAPSHOT: PHARMACEUTICALS AND MEDICINES Source: PRDOLHR, OES Estimates 2012, 2014; QCEW 4-14. PRPB: Statistical Appendix 2014.

Share of GDP 2014 (%):64.62 Change in share of GDP 2010-2014 (%):-5.92 Share of nonfarm industrial employment 2014 (%):2.02 Change in share of nonfarm industrial employment 2012-2014 (%):-1.9 Number of establishments 2014:122 Average size of establishments 2014:141 Value of exports (as % of total):70.15

The Chemical and Allied Products subsector, that comprises the pharmaceutical industry, commanded a share of GDP of 65% in 2014, down from 72% in 2005. By itself, the subsector would edge out 30% of the entire GDP output. In spite of is weight in production, with close to two-thirds of the manufacturing exports, the fact that it is a capital and knowledge intensive sector accounts for its low share of total Manufacturing employment. Puerto Rico is one of the most important biopharmaceutical manufacturing centers in the world, with more than 50 years of experience in pharmaceutical manufacturing and 30-plus years of experience in sterile pharmaceutical manufacturing. With 49 FDA-approved pharmaceutical plants scattered across the island, Puerto Rico is home to top multinational pharmaceutical companies, including Astra Zeneca, Abbott-Abbvie, Bristol-Meyers Squibb, Merck, Pfizer, Eli Lilly and numerous others. Many companies operate more than one site on the island. Two-dozen different kinds pharmaceutical products are manufactured in Puerto Rico: antihypertensive drugs, tranquilizers, laxatives, anti-diabetic drugs, vasodilators, antibiotics and contraceptives, among many others. At last count, 12 of the top 20 pharmaceutical companies have presence on the island.

The Biopharmaceutical Industry Association's (PIA) report on the Economic Impact of the Manufacturing and Commercial Operations of the Biopharmaceutical Industry in Puerto Rico, highlights the fact that the accounts for over 10% of total private employment. Sales of biopharmaceutical products in Puerto Rico reached $2.8 billion in 2011, of which $900 million were generics. According to PIA, the industry outsources more than $150 million per year to local firms, and fuels the clinical trials sector, expanding scientific knowledge in Puerto Rico and providing the foundations for increasing R&D in Puerto Rico throughout a network of private and public partners, both locally and abroad. The reinforcement of the sector is foremost in an economic development strategy that builds on WIOA and PIA's recommendations to strengthen government, academia and industry linkages to protect and further the competitive advantage this sector represents for the Commonwealth.

OTHER MANUFACTURING SUBSECTOR SNAPSHOT: MEDICAL EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

Share of GDP 2014 (%):4.27 Change in share of GDP 2010-2014 (%):0.31 Share of nonfarm industrial employment 2014 (%):0.11 Change in share of nonfarm industrial employment 2012-2014 (%):-91.3 Number of establishments 2014:70 Average size of establishments 2014:173 Value of exports (as % of total):9.18 Source: PRDOLHR, OES Estimates 2012, 2014; QCEW 4-14. PRPB: Statistical Appendix 2014.

The firms in this industry manufacture medical equipment and supplies, including surgical and medical instruments, dental equipment, and surgical appliances. Some 30 companies make up this Puerto Rican industry. In 2012, Puerto Rico's medical device sub-sector employed over 11,000 persons. The value of this industry's exports that year was 4.4 % of the total of Puerto Rico's manufacturing sector's exports. According to PRIDCO, at last count, Puerto Rico was home to over 70 medical devices plants, manufacturing surgical and medical instruments, ophthalmic goods, dental equipment and supplies, orthodontic goods, dentures and appliances, laboratory apparatus and furniture. Medtronic, Stryker, CR Bard, Abbott Medical Optics and Coopervision are among the top international medical equipment and supply companies established in Puerto Rico.

RETAIL TRADE SUBSECTOR SNAPSHOT

Share of GDP 2014 (%):4.89 Change in share of GDP 2010-2014 (%):0.34 Share of nonfarm industrial employment 2014 (%):14.92 Change in share of nonfarm industrial employment 2012-2014 (%):2.1 Number of establishments 2014-4QT:9005 Average size of establishments 2014-4QT:15 Related Personal consumption expenditure 2014: Personal Care, Miscellaneous: $2.46BN Source: PRDOLHR, OES Estimates 2012, 2014; QCEW 4-14. PRPB: Statistical Appendix 2014.

With 132,800 jobs in 2014, up more than 2,000 since 2012, the sector led in employment creation among all sectors with close to 15% of total employment.

Retail trade SWOT in relation to workforce development ? Strengths - Human resources strong managerial capabilities and skills. ? Weaknesses - Income from salaries and production has been stagnated. ? Threats - Strong out-migration of youth human resources.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES SUBSECTOR SNAPSHOT

Share of GDP 2014 (%):0.70 Change in share of GDP 2010-2014 (%):-0.03 Share of nonfarm industrial employment 2014 (%):11.26 Change in share of nonfarm industrial employment 2012-2014 (%):-8.8 Number of establishments 2014-4QT:732 Average size of establishments 2014-4QT:46 Related Personal consumption expenditure 2014: Education: $2.13BN Source: PRDOLHR, OES Estimates 2012, 2014; QCEW 4-14. PRPB: Statistical Appendix 2014.

As pointed out by the PRPB, prospective enrollment in the education system of Puerto Rico faces the reduction in the size of population; the decrease in the number of births; and the increase in migration patterns. The sector's infrastructure included in 2012, 1,461 public schools, 764 private schools, 413 non university postsecondary institutions, 118 church school and 51 institutions of superior education with 141 units or campuses. As argued by the PRPB, this entire infrastructure would be the first victim of the reduction in the education demand (PRPB. Puerto Rico Economic Development Plan (2015): Education, (Draft)). Educational services SWOT in relation to workforce development ? Strengths Higher Education - Considerable number of human resources according to the analysis of the location quotient when compared to the United States. Large number of

educational institutions. ? Weaknesses Higher Education - Labor market needs and academic offerings do not match. Specialties have been identified where the number of graduates does not match with the labor market needs. ? Opportunities K-12 - Integration through private partnerships, government institutions and non-profit sectors, in order to avoid duplication of efforts and maximize human capital. Foreign language courses to broaden the school curriculum in order to motivate and prepare students for the labor market and other global market opportunities. Promotion of vocational education courses focused on labor market opportunities. ? Opportunities Higher Education - Degrees in three steps: certificate (1-year study), associate degree (2 years), and bachelor (4 years) to ensure most students have a higher education certification to support the society's acquisition of human capital. Participation of higher education institutions in the transition of students into the labor market. Implementation of timely, achievable and structured curriculums that use resources efficiently such as, time and student financial aid. Promoting entrepreneurship and business skills irrespective of the academic program. ? Threats K-12 - Reduction in student enrollment should be expected as a result of population reduction. ? Threats Higher Education - Reduced number of birth will have a future impact on the demand and supply in the education services sector. Increased emigration could reduce the demand for educational services. The income and differences in the employment market between Puerto Rico and the United States may be one of the reasons that encourage the emigration of professionals. Current trends show a reduction in the number of teachers in Puerto Rico. Reduction in the academic performance of students who aspire to be college students, which could involve increased costs related to remedial courses and difficulties in the adsorption of new techniques and technologies by students.

HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES SUBSECTOR SNAPSHOT

Share of GDP 2014 (%):3.46 Change in share of GDP 2010-2014 (%):0.11 Share of nonfarm industrial employment 2014 (%):9.60 Change in share of nonfarm industrial employment 2012-2014 (%):6.6 Number of establishments 2014-4QT:7551 Average size of establishments 2014-4QT:12 Related Personal consumption expenditure 2014: Health and funeral services: $11.76BN Source: PRDOLHR, OES Estimates 2012, 2014; QCEW 4-14. PRPB: Statistical Appendix 2014.

According to the PRDH, in 2015 there were 89,953 health professionals registered, up from 76,701 in 2010. Additionally, there were 11,817 physicians and surgeons. According to the PRPB, the average personal expenditure related to health services and funeral services grew at 4.5% annually, while that for food rose only 0.1%. When considering government budget, private insurances and Medicare, and an estimate of self-insured expenditures, aggregated expenditure has remained stable, at $11.76BN, comparable to $11.87BN in 2012.

Sector SWOT in relation to workforce development: ? Strengths - One of the few sectors in Puerto Rico that could thrive without significant increases in current spending. ? Weaknesses - As a product of a reduction of medical residence programs, proper remuneration to health care professionals and a reduction in population Puerto Rico might cause a shortage of medical specializations. ? Opportunities - Medical tourism has become a priority in recent years, which could generate additional jobs and increase national production. ? Threats - Close to two-thirds of the Island's population depend on the government for their health insurance.

FOOD AND ACCOMMODATION SERVICES SUBSECTOR SNAPSHOT

Share of GDP 2014 (%):1.94 Change in share of GDP 2010-2014 (%):0.15 Share of nonfarm industrial employment 2014 (%):8.63 Change in share of nonfarm industrial employment 2012-2014 (%):9.3 Number of establishments 2014-4QT: 4,186 Average size of establishments 2014-4QT: 18

Related Personal Expenditure 2014: Food: $5.02BN Source: PRDOLHR, OES Estimates 2012, 2014; QCEW 4-14. PRPB: Statistical Appendix 2014.

Sector SWOT in relation to workforce development: ? Weaknesses - Services are not multilingual thus limiting the attraction of visitors. ? Opportunities - Possibility of growth in job creation. Increase integration (linkages) with other sectors, i.e. between the agricultural and food services sectors (restaurants, fast food, among others) to reduce the imported inputs.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SECTOR SNAPSHOT

Share of GDP 2014 (%):7.55 Change in share of GDP 2010-2014 (%):-0.94 Share of nonfarm industrial employment 2014 (%):17.78 Change in share of nonfarm industrial employment 2012-2014 (%):-18.4 Source: PRDOLHR, OES Estimates 2012, 2014; QCEW 4-14. PRPB: Statistical Appendix 2014.

Aside from Manufacturing, a significant change has occurred in the public administration sector, which once accounted for almost a quarter million jobs in the Puerto Rican workforce. It has lost almost one-fourth of its total employment share, led by government downsizing policies.

Occupations

Next section highlights the dynamics of the occupations with the largest expansions (in absolute terms) between 2010 and 2014.

OCCUPATIONS WITH LARGEST INCREASE IN EMPLOYMENT, 2010-2014

OCCUPATION TITLE, MHW2010 ($), MHW2014 ($)

Retail Salespersons, 8.96, 9.01 Personal Care Aides, 8.01, 8.10 Waiters and Waitresses, 8.98, 8.25 Cashiers, 8.13, 8.31 Cooks, Restaurant, 8.65, 8.80 First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers, 10.17, 10.62 Assemblers and Fabricators, All Other, 8.38, 8.50 Pharmacy Technicians, 9.69, 10.80 First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers, 13.53, 13.60 Teacher Assistants, NA, NA

OCCUPATION TITLE, EST. 2010, EST. 2014, NET GAIN % GAIN

Retail Salespersons, 37,740, 42,840, 5,100, 13.5 Personal Care Aides, 1,790, 5,360, 3,570, 199.4 Waiters and Waitresses, 6,780, 9,930, 3,150, 46.5 Cashiers, 27,840, 30,810, 2,970, 10.7 Cooks, Restaurant, 3,120, 5,370, 2,250, 72.1 First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers, 5,720, 7,750, 2,030, 35.5 Assemblers and Fabricators, All Other, 2,250, 4,030, 1,780, 79.1 Pharmacy Technicians, 2,540, 4,070, 1,530, 60.2 First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers, 10,650, 12,120, 1,470, 13.8 Teacher Assistants, 5,230, 6,610, 1,380, 26.4

Next section highlights the dynamics of the occupations with the largest contractions (in absolute terms) in the period 2010-2014.

OCCUPATIONS WITH LARGEST DECREASE IN EMPLOYMENT, 2010-2014 Occupation title, Est. 2010, Est. 2014, % loss Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education, 29,500, 16,781, -46.0 Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education, 20,195, 10,891,

-48.8 Food Preparation Workers, 20,157, 13,167, -37.9 Special Education Teachers, Kindergarten and Elementary School, 6,427, 1,753, -74.1 Postsecondary Teachers, All Other, 7,489, 2,947, -62.6 Business Operations Specialists, All Other, 11,728, 7,561, -38.7 Team Assemblers, 10,165, 6,449, -39.8 Executive Secretaries and Executive Administrative Assistants, 13,929, 10,869, -25.9 Word Processors and Typists, 7,534, 4,567, -42.5 Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers, 20,255, 18,072, -15.2

According to PRDOLHR's report on skills and occupations in high-demand, in 2014, the top hiring occupations were: Retail Salespersons (12.5% of total hires); Cashiers (4.9%); Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food (4.1%); and Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive (3%). The top three has remained so since 2010, but with a different weight respect to that of 2010 when Retail Salespersons accounted for 7.8%, Cashiers for 7.4% and Food preparation, 5.5%.

INDUSTRIES WITH ABOVE AVERAGE ESTIMATED JOB INCREASES (%), 2012-2022 (PRDOLHR: LONG TERM PROJECTIONS BY INDUSTRY 2012-2022)

NAICS Title, Projected 2022, Total increase, Change (%) Total Employment, All Jobs, 1,172,131 , 109,384 , 10.29 Other Information Services, 211 , 79 , 59.85 Social Assistance, 17,346 , 6,416 , 58.70 Motion Picture and Sound Recording Industries, 3,833 , 1,272 , 49.67 Transit and Ground Passenger Transport, 3,365 , 1,111 , 49.29 Securities, Commodity Contracts, and Other, 1,666 , 539 , 47.83 Internet Service Providers, Web Search Portals, and Data Processing Services, 2,849 , 918 , 47.54 Health and Personal Care Stores, 25,150 , 7,619 , 43.46 Nursing and Residential Care Facilities, 7,818 , 2,268 , 40.86 Waste Management and Remediation Service, 5,505 , 1,497 , 37.35 Museums, Historical Sites, and Similar Institution, 421 , 112 , 36.25 Hospitals (Public and Private), 42,705 , 11,239 , 35.72 General Merchandise Stores, 33,036 , 8,292 , 33.51 Telecommunications, 12,946 , 3,126 , 31.83 Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers, 16,431 , 3,953 , 31.68 Real Estate, 12,371 , 2,950 , 31.31

INDUSTRIES WITH LARGEST ESTIMATED JOB DECREASES (%), 2012-2022 (PRDOLHR: LONG TERM PROJECTIONS BY INDUSTRY 2012-2022)

NAICS Title, Projected 2022, Total decrease, Change (%) Leather and Allied Product Manufacturing, 460 , -288 , -38.50 Apparel Manufacturing, 5,487 , -3,187 , -36.74 Plastics and Rubber Products Manufacturing, 1,121 , -481 , -30.02 Computer and Electronic Product Manufacturing, 3,737 , -1,282 , -25.54 Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing, 596 , -194 , -24.56 Support Activities for Transportation, 2,798 , -609 , -17.87 Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction, 4,648 , -887 , -16.03 Wholesale Electronic Markets and Agents and Brokers, 823 , -148 , -15.24 Electrical Equipment, Appliance, and Component Manufacturing, 4,396 , -728 , -14.21 Construction of Buildings, 15,523 , -2,567 , -14.19 Beverage and Tobacco Product Manufacturing, 2,030 , -314 , -13.40 Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores, 2,271 , -341 , -13.06 Transportation Equipment Manufacturing, 1,037 , -153 , -12.86 Paper Manufacturing, 1,148 , -168 , -12.77 Water Transportation, 484 , -69 , -12.48 Source: PRDOLHR, Long Term Projections by Industry 2012-2022.

Occupations

OCCUPATIONS WITH ABOVE AVERAGE ESTIMATED JOB INCREASES (%), 2012-2022 (SOURCE: PRDOLHR, LONG TERM PROJECTIONS BY OCCUPATION 2012-2022)

SOC Occupation, 2022, Over 2012, Change (%) Personal Care Aides, 10,073, 3,796, 60.47 Pharmacy Technicians, 5,128, 1,645, 47.23 Home Health Aides, 3,369, 1,040, 44.65 Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists, 2,577, 727, 39.30 Pharmacy Aides, 3,706, 1,031, 38.54 Pharmacists, 2,705, 719, 36.20 Medical Secretaries, 8,513, 2,053, 31.78 Childcare Workers, 5,731, 1,325, 30.07 Refuse and Recyclable Material Collectors, 3,853, 838, 27.79 Registered Nurses, 24,195, 5,210, 27.44 Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food, 11,784, 2,509, 27.05

INDUSTRIES WITH LARGEST ESTIMATED JOB DECREASES (%), 2012-2022 PRDOLHR: Long Term Projections by Occupation 2012-2022

SOC OCCUPATION, 2022, BELOW 2012, CHANGE (%) Sewing Machine Operators, 7,124, 2,034, -22.21 Word Processors and Typists, 3,907, 1,503, -27.78 Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers, 17,780, 1,066, -5.66 Executive Secretaries and Executive Administrative Assistants, 9,161, 826, -8.27 Data Entry Keyers, 2,298, 678, -22.78 Correctional Officers and Jailers, 5,029, 557, -9.97 Team Assemblers, 6,192, 509, -7.60 Couriers and Messengers, 3,416, 423, -11.02 First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers, 4,402, 290, -6.18 Molding, Coremaking, and Casting Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic, 1,086, 283, -20.67